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OLD MELBOURNE MEMORIES

BY

ROLF BOLDREWOOD

AUTHOR OF

'MY RUN HOME,' 'THE SQUATTER'S DREAM,' 'ROBBERY UNDER ARMS,' ETC.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED

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OLD MELBOURNE MEMORIES

PREFACE

THESE reminiscences of the early days of Melbourne —a city which, as a family, we helped to found— awakened, when first published in the columns of the *Australasian*, an amount of general interest most gratifying to the writer.

It is hoped that, in their present more convenient form, they may secure and retain the approbation of the public.

I should feel bound to apologise for the mention of names in full were I not conscious that I have written no line calculated to offend; nor have I, for one moment, failed in sincere goodwill towards every comrade of that joyous time.

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CHAPTER I

A.D. 1840

STANDING in the gathering winterly twilight, at the intersection of Elizabeth and Flinders Streets, one instinctively remarks the long crowded suburban trains, laden with homeward-bound passengers, quitting the city and care for the night's charmed interval. All the streets of busy Melbourne are yet thronged, in spite of the apparently rapid diminution which is proceeding. The indefinable hum, noticeable in large urban populations at the close of the day, as the lamps are lit, which mark for most men the boundary between work and recreation, is increasingly audible. The grand outlines of the larger public buildings become suggestively indistinct. If your ear be good, you may hear the steam-whistle and the roar of the country trains at Spencer Street Station. The senses of the musing spectator are filled to saturation with the sights and sounds proper to the largest, the most highly civilised, the most prosperous city in the world, for the years of its existence. Stranger than fiction

does it not seem, that in the month of April, in the year of grace 1840, we should have migrated *en famille* from Sydney to assist in the colonisation of Port Phillip, in the founding of this city of Melbourne? The moderate-sized schooner which carried us safely hither in a few hours under a week had been chartered by Paterfamilias, so that we were unrestricted as to many matters not usually left to the discretion of passengers. It was a floating home. Colonists of ten years' standing, we had many things to bear with us, which under other circumstances of transit must have been left behind. There were carriage horses and cows, the boys' ponies, the children's canaries, poultry, and pigeons, dogs and cats, babies and nurses, furniture, flower-pots, workmen, house servants—all the component portions of a large household shifted bodily from a suburban home, and ready to be transferred to the first suitable dwelling in the new settlement. One can easily imagine to what a state of misery and confusion such a freight would have been reduced had bad weather come on. But the winds and the waves were kind, and on Saturday afternoon the harbour-master of Williamstown partook of some slight alcoholic refreshment on board, and welcomed us to Port Phillip. Well is remembered even now the richly-green appearance of the under-stocked grassy flat upon which the particularly small village of Williamstown stood. A few cottages, more huts —with certain public-houses, of course—made up the township. More distinctly marked even were the succulence and juiciness of the first Port Phillip mutton-chops upon which was regaled our keenly

hungry party. We had just quitted the enfeebled meat markets of Sydney, scarce recovered from that terrible drought which wasted the years of 1837, 1838, and 1839. We had reached a land of Goshen evidently—a land of milk and butter, if not of honey—a land of chops and steaks, of sirloins and "under-cuts"—of all youthful luxuries well-nigh forgotten—of late unattainable in New South Wales as strawberry ice in a cane-brake.

Among other trifles which our very complete outfit had comprehended was a small steamboat adapted for the tortuous but necessary navigation of the Yarra Yarra, of which noble stream, moving calmly through walls of ti-tree, we commenced to make the acquaintance. This steamerlet—she was a *very* tiny automaton, puffing out of all proportion to her speed—but the *only* funnel-bearer—think of that, Victorians of this high-pressure era!—had been sent down by the head of the family the voyage before, safely bestowed upon the deck of a larger vessel. "The *Movastar* was a better boat," I daresay, but the tiny *Firefly* bore us and the Lares and Penates of many other "first families"—in the sense of priority—safely to *terra firma* on the north side of what was then called the "Yarra Basin." This was an oval-shaped natural enlargement of the average width of the river, much as a waterhole in a creek exceeds the ordinary channel. The energetic Batman and the sturdy Cobbett of the south, Pascoe Fawkner, had thought it good to set about making a town, and here we found the bustling Britisher of the period engaged in building up Melbourne with might and main. Our leader laid it down at that

time, as the result of his experience of many lands, that the new colony, being outside of 36 deg. south latitude, would not be scourged with droughts as had been New South Wales from her commencement. In great measure, and absolutely as regarding the western portions of Victoria, this prophecy has been borne out.

Sufficient time had elapsed for the army of mechanics, then established in Port Phillip, to erect many weatherboard and a few brick houses. Into a cottage of the latter construction we were hastily inducted, pending the finishing of a two-storied mansion in Flinders Street, not very far from Prince's Bridge. Bridge was there none in those days, it is hardly necessary to say; not even the humble one with wooden piers that spanned the stream later, and connected Melbourne people with the sandy forest of South Yarra, then much despised for its alleged agricultural inferiority: still there was a punt. You could get across, but not always when you wanted. And I recall the incident of Captain Brunswick Smyth, late of the 50th Regiment, and the first commandant of mounted police, riding down to the ferry, from which the guardian was absent—"sick, or drunk, or suthin"—and, with military impatience, dashing on board with a brace of troopers, who pulled the lumbering barge across, and fastened her to the farther shore.

Large trees at that time studded the green meadow, which, after the winter rain, was marshy and reed-covered. There did I shoot, and bear home with schoolboy pride, a blue crane—the Australian heron—who, being only wounded, "went near" to

pick out one of my eyes, wounding my cheek-bone with a sudden stab of his closed beak. The lovely bronze-wing pigeons were plentiful then amid the wild forest tracks of Newtown, afterwards Collingwood. Many times have I and my boy comrades stood at no great distance from the present populous suburb and wondered whether we were going straight for the "settlement," as we then irreverently styled the wonder-city. The streets of the new-born town had been "ruled off," as some comic person phrased it, very straight and wide; but there had not been sufficient money as yet available from the somewhat closely-guarded distant Treasury of Sydney to clear them from stumps. However, as in most communities during the speculative stage, any amount was forthcoming when required for purposes of amusement. Balls, picnics, races, and dinners were frequent and fashionable. Driving home from one of the first-named entertainments, through the lampless streets, a carriage, piloted by a gallant officer, came to signal grief against a stump. The ladies were thrown out, the carriage thrown over, and the charioteer fractured. Paterfamilias, absent on business, marked his disapproval of the expedition by resolutely refraining from repairing the vehicle. For years after it stood in the back yard with cracked panels, a monument of domestic miscalculation.

It must be terribly humiliating to the survivors of that "first rush" to consider what untold wealth lay around them in the town and suburban allotments, which the most guarded investment would have secured. The famous subdivision in Collins Street, upon which the present Bank of Australasia now

stands, was purchased by the Wesleyan denomination for £70! Acres and half-acres in Flinders, Collins, and Elizabeth Streets were purchased at the first Government sales held in Sydney at similar and lower rates. I have heard the late Mr. Jacques, at that time acting as Crown auctioneer, selling at the Sydney markets ever so much of Williamstown, at prices which would cause the heart of the land-dealer of the present day to palpitate strangely. I can hear now the old gentleman's full, sonorous voice rolling out the words, "Allotment so-and-so, parish of Will-will-rook," the native names being largely and very properly used. "Villamanatah" and "Maribyrnong" occurred, I think, pretty often in the same series of sales. The invariable increase in prices after the first sales led naturally to a species of South Sea stock bubbledom. He who bought to-day—and men of all classes shared in the powerful excitement—was so certain of an advance of 25, 50, or cent per cent, that every one who could command the wherewithal hastened to the land lottery, where every ticket was a prize. Speculative eagles in flocks were gathered around the carcase. Borrowing existed then, though undeveloped as one of the fine arts compared to its latest triumphs; bills, even in that struggling infancy of banking, were thick in the air. Successful or prospective sales necessitated champagne lunches, whereby the empty bottles—erstwhile filled with that cheerful vintage—accumulated in stacks around the homes and haunts of the leading operators. The reigning Governor-General, on a flying visit to the non-mineral precursor of Ballarat and Bendigo, noted the unparalleled pro-

fusion, and, it is said, refused on that account some request of the self-elected Patres Conscripti of our Rome in long clothes. Farms, in blocks of forty and eighty acres, had been marked off above the Yarra Falls. They had been purchased at prices tending to be high, as prices ruled then. But they could not have been really high, for one of them, since pretty well known as Toorak, for years rented for several thousands per annum, and possessing a value of about £1000 each for its eighty acres, was purchased by an early colonist for less than £1000, all told. It was subsequently sold by him, under the crushing pressure of the panic of 1842 and 1843, for £120.

What a different place was the Flemington racecourse, say, when Victor and Sir Charles ran for the Town Plate—when Romeo's white legs and matchless shoulder were to be seen thereon—when Jack Hunter's filly, Hellcat, won the Sir Charles Purse, furnished by a generous stud patron for the owners of descendants of that forgotten courser. Fancy the change to the Cup day with Martini-Henry coming in! Where racing springs up, there also do differences of opinion frequently occur. With respect to the said victory of Hellcat, then the property of Jack Hunter, it was objected by a well-known "horse couper" of the day, known as "Hopping Jack," that she was no true descendant of Sir Charles. He was contradicted *very* flatly, and sufficient proof having been afforded to the stewards, her owner received the stakes. Still the mighty mind of John Ewart held distrust as he ambled home, dangling his "game" leg on his eel-backed bay horse, the same which carried him overland from Sydney to Melbourne in

ten days—six hundred miles. "A sworn horse-courser," like Blount, was Hopping Jack, and, unlike Marmion's fast squire, had ridden many a steeple-chase. In the quickly shifting adventure-scope of the day it chanced that the two Jacks went to sea, desiring to revisit Scotia, doubtless for their pecuniary benefit. A great storm arose, and the homeward-bound vessel was wrecked. The passengers barely escaped with their lives, and were forced to return to Port Phillip. At one period of the disaster there was little or no hope for the lives of all. As they clung gloomily to the uplifted deck—fast on a reef—Hopping Jack approached Mr. Hunter with a grave and resolved air. All waited to hear his words. In that solemn hour he proved the exquisite accuracy of the thought, "The ruling passion strong in death," by thus adjuring his turf acquaintance, "Look here, Mr. Hunter, we shall all be in —— in twenty minutes, it can't matter much *now*. Was Hellcat *really* a Sir Charles?" History is silent as to the reply.

How strange a Melbourne would the picture—still distinctly photographed on memory's wondrous "negative"—present to the inhabitant of 1884. A solitary wood cart is struggling down from the direction of Brighton along the unmade sandy track, patiently to await the convenience of the puntman. Frank Liardet is driving his unicorn omnibus team from the lonely beach, where now the sailors revel in many a glittering bar, and the tall sugar-refinery chimney "lifts its head" and smokes—or, at any rate, did recently. The squatter's wool-freighted bullock-teams lumber along the deep ruts of Flinders

Lane. John Pascoe Fawkner bustles up and down the western end, at that time the fashionable part, of Collins Street. The eastern portion of that street —now decorated with palatial clubs and treasuries, and dominated by doctors—was then principally known as "the way to the Plenty," a rivulet on the banks of which still abode certain cheerful young agricultural aristocrats, who had not had time quite to ruin themselves. Now a whole tribe of blacks—wondering and frightened, young and old, warriors and greybeards, women and children—is being driven along Collins Street by troopers, on their way to the temporary gaol, there to be incarcerated for real or fancied violence. The philanthropist may console himself with the knowledge that they burrowed under their dungeon slabs and, I think, escaped. If not, they were released next day.

Mr. Latrobe, successor of Captain Lonsdale, on a state day—not styled Governor, but his Honour the Superintendent—is riding towards Batman's Hill on a crop-eared hog-maned cob, yclept Knocker-croghery, attired in uniform, escorted by Captain Smyth and his terrible mounted police, the only military force of the day. The great plains, the wide forest-parks, shut closely in the little town on every side. Countless swans and ducks are disporting themselves in unscared freedom upon the great West Melbourne marsh. The travel-stained squatter rides wearily up to the livery stable, as yet unable to shorten by coach or rail a mile of his journey.

CHAPTER II

THE FAR WEST

It seems only the other day—but surely it must be a long time ago—that January evening of 1844, when I camped my cattle near the old burying-ground at North Melbourne. I was bound for the Western district, where I proposed to "take up a run." And towards this pastoral paradise the dawn saw my "following" winding its way next morning.

A modest drove and slender outfit were mine; all that the hard times had spared. Two or three hundred well-bred cattle, a dray and team with provisions for six months, two stock-horses, one faithful old servant, one young ditto (unfaithful), £1 in my purse — *voilà tout.* Rather a limited capital to begin the world with; but what did I want with money in those days? I was a boy, which means a prince—happy, hopeful, healthy, beyond all latter-day possibilities, bound on a journey to seek my fortune. All the fairy-tale conditions were fulfilled. I had "horse to ride and weapon to wear"—that is, a 12-foot stock-whip by Nangus Jack—clothes, tools, guns, and ammunition; a new world around and

beyond; what could money do for the gentleman-adventurer burning with anticipation of heroic exploration? Such thoughts must have passed through my brain, inasmuch as I invested 75 per cent of my cash in the purchase of a cattle dog. Poor Dora, she barked her last some thirty-five years agone.

On the next day we crossed the Moonee Ponds at Flemington, took the Keilor road, and managed to bustle our mob all the way to the Werribee. A slightly unfair journey; but the summer day was long, and we made the river with the fading light about eight. I had a reason, too. Here bivouacked my good old friend the late William Ryrie, of Yering. He, too, was journeying to the west country with a large drove of Upper Yarra stores. He had kindly consented to join forces—an arrangement more to my advantage than his. So, as his cattle were drawing into camp, I cheerfully "boxed" mine therewith, and relieved myself by the act of further anxiety.

Night watches were duly set, after an evening meal of a truly luxurious character. I felt at odd moments as if I would have given all the world for a doze unrebuked. At last the whole four mortal hours came to an end. Then I understood, almost for the first time in my life, what "first-class sleep" really meant.

At sunrise I awoke much fresher than paint, and walking to the door of the tent, which held three stretchers—those of the leader of the party, his brother Donald, and myself—looked out upon the glorious far-stretching wild. What a sight was then

seen with the eyes of unworn, undoubting youth! On three sides lay the plains, a dimly verdurous expanse, over which a night mist was lifting itself along the line of the river. The outline of the Anakie-You Yangs range was sharply drawn against the dawn-lighted horizon, while far to the north-east was seen the forest-clothed summit of Mount Macedon, and westward gleamed the sea. The calm water of Corio Bay and the abrupt cone of Station Peak, nearly in the line of our route, formed an unmistakable yet picturesque landmark.

The cattle, peacefully grazing, were spread over the plain, having been released from camp. The horses were being brought in; among them I was quick to distinguish my valuable pair. Old Watts, the campkeeper, a hoary retainer of Yering—who gave his name to the affluent of the Yarra so called—was cooking steaks for breakfast. Everything was delightfully new, strangely exhilarating, with a fresh flavour of freedom and adventure.

After breakfast we saddled up, and, mounting our horses, strolled on after a leisurely fashion with the cattle. I was riding, as became an Australian, a four-year-old colt, my own property, and bred in the family. A grandson of Skeleton and of Satellite, he was moderately fast and a great stayer. Mr. Donald Ryrie rode a favourite galloway yclept Dumple—a choice roadster and clever stock-horse, much resembling in outline Dandie Dinmont's historic "powney." He and I were sufficiently near in age to enjoy discursive conversation during the long, slightly tedious driving hours, to an extent which occasionally impaired our usefulness. When in

argument or narrative we permitted "the tail" to straggle unreasonably we were sharply recalled to our duty. Our kind-hearted choleric leader then adopted language akin to that in which the ruffled M.F.H. exhorts the erring horsemen of his field.

Ah me, what pleasant days were those! A little warm, even hot, doubtless. But we could take off our coats without fear of Mrs. Grundy. There was plenty of grass. "Travelling" was an honourable and recognised occupation in those Arcadian times. "Purchased land" was an unknown quantity. Droughts were disbelieved in, and popularly supposed to belong exclusively to the "Sydney side." The horses were fresh, the stages were moderate, and when a halt was called at sundown the cattle soon lay contentedly down in the soft, thick grass. The camp fires were lighted, and another pleasant, hopeful day was succeeded by a restful yet romantic night.

So we fared on past the Little River and Fyans' Ford, where a certain red cow of mine was nearly drowned, and had to be left behind; then to Beale's, on the Barwon; thence to Colac, for we had decided to take the inner road and not to go by "the Frenchman's," or "Cressy," then represented solely by Monsieur (and Madame) Duverney's Inn, as it was then called.

Apropos of Fyans' Ford, there was an inn as we passed up. When returning I met with an adventure nearly similar to that in "She Stoops to Conquer." I left the station for Melbourne in the December following, having earned a Christmas at home. When I arrived at Geelong I turned out earl morning, and rode to Fyans' Ford to see if

find "tale or tidings" of the red cow left behind, as before mentioned. How honest were nearly all men in those days! I *did* hear of her, and, having discovered her whereabouts, I went to the old house to breakfast, preparatory to riding to Heidelberg, fifty-seven miles all told, that night.

Dismounting at the stable door, I gave my mare to the groom, with a brisk injunction as to a good feed, and passed into the house. In the parlour was a maid-servant laying the breakfast. I stood before the fireplace in an easy attitude, and demanded when breakfast would be ready.

"In about half an hour, sir." I noticed a slightly surprised air.

"Can't you get it a little sooner, Mary?" I said, guessing at her name with the affability of a tavern guest of fashion and substance.

"I don't know, sir," she made answer meekly.

"Come, Mary," I said, "surely you could manage something in less time? I have a long way to ride to-day."

She smiled, and was about to reply, when a door opened, and a middle-aged personage, with full military whiskers, and an air of authority, looked in.

"I don't think I have the pleasure of knowing you, sir," he stated, with a certain dignity.

"No," I said; "no! I think not. Not been here since last year." (I did not particularly see the necessity either.) I was cool and cheerful, and it struck me that, for an innkeeper, he was over-punctilious.

"This is no inn, sir," he said, with increased sternness.

In a moment my position flashed upon me. I then remembered I had not noticed the sign as I rode up. The house and grounds, large and extensive, had been occupied by a private family. Nothing very uncommon about that. So here had I been ordering my horse to be fed, and lecturing the parlour-maid, all the while in a strange gentleman's abode.

I could not help laughing, but immediately proceeded to apologise fully and formally, at the same time pointing out that the place had been an inn when I last saw it. Hence my mistake, which I sincerely regretted. I bowed, and made for the door.

My host's visage relaxed. "Come," he said, "I see how it all happened. But you must not lose your breakfast for all that. Mrs. —— will be ready directly, and my daughter. I trust you will give us the pleasure of your company."

"All's well that ends well." I was introduced to the ladies of the house, who made themselves agreeable. There was a good laugh over my invasion of the parlour and Mary's astonishment. I breakfasted with appetite. We parted cordially. And, as my mare carried me to Heidelberg that night without a sign of distress, she probably had breakfasted well also.

I recollect—how well!—the night I reached Lake Colac. Mr. Hugh Murray had, I think, the only station upon it, and the Messrs. Dennis were a short distance on the hither side. The Messrs. Robertson farther on. The cattle had rather a long day without water. Not quite so bad as the Old

Man Plain, but a good stretch. We did not "make" the lake until after dark. How they all rushed in! It was shallow, and sound as to bottom. We concluded to let them alone, not believing that they would wander far through such good feed before day. So we had our supper cheerfully, and turned in. We could hear them splashing about in the water, drinking exhaustively, and finally returning in division. At daylight, the first man up (not the writer) descried them comfortably camped, nearly all down within a few hundred yards.

How far is the Parin Yallock? It is many a year since I saw the Stony Rises, as we somewhat unscientifically called the volcanic trap dykes and lava outflows, now riven into boulders and scoria masses, yet clothed with richest grass and herbage, which surround for many miles the craters of Noorat, "The Sisters"—Leura and Porndon. Well, we took it very easily along that pastoral Eden, the garden of Australia, where dwelt pastoral man before the Fall, ere he was driven forth into far sun-scorched drought-accursed wilds to earn his bread by the sweat of his brain, and to bear the heart-sickness that comes of hope long deferred—the deadly despair that is born of long years of waiting for slow remorseless ruin. Ha! how have we skipped over half-a-century, more or less! Bless you, nobody was ruined in those golden days, because there was no credit. Riverina was almost as much a *terra incognita* as Borneo—much more the Lower Macquarie and the Upper Bogan. But I must get back to Colac, and feel the thick kangaroo grass under my feet, quite as thick as an English meadow

(I have been there since, too), as Donald and I led our horses. He had a rein which slipped out at the cheek, contrived on purpose for his horse, and the better sustentation of him, Dumple.

We leave Captain Fyans' station on our right. He was the Crown Lands Commissioner in those days, and had the sense to take up a small, but very choice, bit of the "waste lands of the Crown" on his own account. There abide the "FF" cattle to this day, if the Messrs. Robertson have not deposed them in favour of sheep, or the rabbits eaten them out of house and home.

We pass the police station, another rich pasture reserved for the mounted police troopers and their chargers. There old Hatsell Garrard dwelt for a season, with his fresh-coloured English yeoman face, his pleasant, racy talk, and unerring judgment in horse-flesh. Did not Cornborough, that grand old son of Tramp, emigrate to Victoria under his auspices? I need say no more.

Then we come to Scott and Richardson's, the Parin Yallock station proper. Both good fellows. The latter might aver with Ralph Leigh—

> Those were the days when my beard was black,

and the good steed Damper was not much averse to "a stiff top rail," though carrying a rider considerably over six feet, and a welter weight to boot. Between the station and the crossing-place—difficult and dangerous it was, too, even for horsemen—we camped. It came on to rain. It was [illegible] unpleasant night (except one when we [illegible] drays and had no supper. I didn't sm[illegible]

oh! how hungry I was). The cattle were uneasy, and "ringed" all night. Next morning the camp was like a circus on a large scale. The soil is rich and black. I have seen no mud to speak of for the last ten years. Even the mud in those parts was of a superior description.

Next day we faced the Parin Yallock Creek and its malign ford—save the mark! One dray was bogged; several head of cattle; my colt went down tail first, and nearly "turned turtle," but eventually the *corps d'armée* got safely over to the sound but rugged stony rises. Crossing them, we reached the broad rich flats around the lovely lake of Purrumbeet.

It was late when we got there, the cattle having been hustled and bustled to get out of the labyrinthine stony rises before dark; and the day turning out warm after the rain, they were inclined to drink heartily. To this intent they ran violently into the lake, I don't know how many fathoms deep, and shelving abruptly. All the leaders were out of their depth at once, and swam about with a surprised air. However, the beach was hard and smooth, so back they came, in good trim to set to at the luxuriant herbage which borders the lake shore. I wonder what the Messrs. Manifold would think now of a thousand head of cattle coming ravaging up close to the house, and walking into their clover and rye-grass, without saying "by your leave," much less "reporting."

When the day broke how lovely the landscape seemed. The rugged lava country that we had left behind had given place to immense meadows and grassy slopes, thinly timbered with handsome black-

wood trees. The Lake Purrumbeet was the great central feature—a noble sheet of water, with sloping green banks, and endless depth of the fresh pure element. On the western bank was built a comfortable cottage, where flowers and fruit trees by their unusual luxuriance bore testimony to the richness of the deep black alluvial.

We did a "lazyally" sort of day—the cattle knee-deep in grass, every one taking it extremely easy. Leura, another volcano out of work, surrounded by wonderful greenery, wherein the station cattle lay about, looking like prize-winners that had strayed from a show-yard, was passed about mid-day. Next morning saw us at Mr. Neil Black's Basin Bank station. Here we saw the heifers of the NB herd. They were "tailed" or herded, as was the fashion in those days, and a fine well-grown, well-bred lot they were. The overseer was either Donald or Angus "to be sure whateffer," one of a draft of stalwart Highlanders which Mr. Black used to import annually. Very desirable colonists they were, and as soon as they "got the English," a matter of some difficulty at the outset, they commenced to save money at a noticeable rate. A fair-sized section of the Western district is now populated by these Glenormiston clansmen and their descendants, and no man was better served than their worthy chief—Neil of that ilk.

From Basin Bank we drove towards the late Mr. William Hamilton's Yallock station, where we abode one night. Here, or at the next stage, the trail was not so plain. I have a reminiscence of our having camped one night at a spot not intended for

such a halt, and losing our supper in consequence. No doubt we made up for it at breakfast.

Now we had come to the end of the genuine Colac country. What we were approaching was a good land, richly grassed, and, agriculturally speaking, perhaps superior to the other. But I shall always consider the sub-district that I have just described, including Messrs. Black's, Robertson's, Manifold's, and one or two other properties, having regard to soil, climate, pasture, and distance from a metropolis, as the very choicest area to be found in the whole Australian continent.

A few more days' easy travelling took us nearly to our journey's end. We reached the bank of the Merai, at Grasmere, the head station of the Messrs. Bolden, and there, not many miles from the site of the flourishing township of Warrnambool, we drafted our respective cattle, and went different ways—Mr. Ryrie's to his run, not far from Tower Hill, and mine to appropriate some unused country between the Merai and the sea.

Here I camped for about six months, and a right joyous time it was in that "kingdom by the sea." I remember riding down to the shore one bright day, just below where Warrnambool now stands. No trace of man or habitation was there, "nor roof nor latched door." As I rode over the sand hummock which bordered the beach, a draft of out-lying cattle, basking in the sun on the farther side, rose and galloped off. All else was silent and tenantless as before the days of Cook.

I took up my abode provisionally upon the bank of the Merai, which, near the mouth, was a broad

and imposing stream, and turned out my herd. My stockman and I spent our days in "going round" the cattle; shooting and kangaroo-hunting in odd times—recreation to which he, as an ex-poacher of considerable experience, took very kindly. The pied goose, here in large flocks, with duck, teal, pigeons, and an occasional wild turkey, were our chief sport and sustenance.

On the opposite side of the river was the first cultivated area in the Port Fairy district, then known as Campbell's farm. An old colonial whaling company had their headquarters at the Port, and Captain Campbell, a stalwart Highlander long known as Port Fairy Campbell, had utilised his spare crews in the early days, and tested the richness of that famous tract of fertile land now known as the Farnham Survey.

We were not without practical demonstration of the bounty of the soil. One evening I was astonished to see splendid mealy potatoes served up with the accustomed corned beef.

"Where did you get these, Mrs. Burge?" said I to the stockman's wife.

"From the lubras," rather consciously; "I gave them beef in exchange."

"A very fair one," but a light suddenly striking upon my mental vision,—"Where do the lubras get them from? They toil not, neither do they spin!"

"I don't know for certain, sir," she answered, looking down, "but they're digging the potato crop, I believe, at Campbell's farm." Here was foreshadowed the enormous Warrnambool export, that immense intercolonial potato trade, which has

latterly assumed such proportions, and which invades even this far north-western corner of New South Wales. What glorious times I had, gun in hand, or with our three famous kangaroo dogs, slaying the swift marsupial. In those days he was tolerated and rather admired, no one imagining that he would be, a couple of generations later, a scourge and an oppressor, eating the sparse herbage of the overstocked squatter, and being classed as a "noxious animal," with a price actually put on his head by utilitarian legislators.

CHAPTER III

THE DEATH OF VIOLET

THOUGH kangaroo were plentiful, they were not so overwhelming in number as they have since become. Joe Burge and I had many a day's good sport together on foot. Like Mr. Sawyer and other sensible people, we often saved our horses by using our own legs. For the dogs, Chase was a rough-haired Scotch deerhound, not quite pure, yet had she great speed and courage. Nothing daunted her. I saw her once jump off a dray, where she was in hospital with a broken leg (it had been smashed by the kick of an emu), and hobble off after a sudden-appearing kangaroo. She was said to have killed a dingo at ten months old—no trifling feat.

Nero and Violet were brother and sister. They were smooth-haired greyhounds—the ordinary kangaroo dog of the colonist—very fast; and from a distant cross of "bull" had inherited an utter fearlessness of disposition, which was rather against them, as the sequel will show.

Violet was so fast that she could catch the brush kangaroo (the wallaby) within sight. We rarely had

occasion to search if they started close to our feet, and the largest and fiercest "old man" forester did not seem to be too heavy weight for her. When he stood at bay she would fly in at the throat, instead of looking out for a side chance. In consequence she was awfully cut up many times when a more cunning dog would have escaped scatheless.

One afternoon Joe and I had taken a longer round than usual on foot, and were returning by the beach, when we heard Violet's bark a long way in front. We knew then that she had "stuck up" or brought to bay a large forester. If middle-sized she would have killed him; in that case running mute. So it was an "old man" large enough to stand and fight.

"We'd better get on, sir," said Joe; "the poor slut'll be cut to ribbons. She's a plucky little fool, and don't know how to save herself."

On we went, both running our best. We were in decent wind, but it was a couple of miles before we reached "hound and quarry." Some time had elapsed, and the fight had been many times renewed. When we got up the grassy spot was trampled all around, and in more than one place were deep red stains. Both animals were dreadfully exhausted. The great marsupial—the height of a tall man when he raised himself on his haunches—was covered with blood from the throat and breast, his haunches were deeply pierced by the dog's sharp fangs, but his terrible claws had inflicted some frightful gashes adown Violet's chest and flanks. As she feebly circled round him, barking hoarsely, she staggered with weakness; but her

eye was bright and keen—there was not a shade of surrender about her.

Joe rushed in at once and struck the old man full between the eyes with a heavy stick. He fell prone, and lay like a log. Violet staggered to his throat, which she seized, but, having not another grain of strength, fell alongside of him, panting and sobbing until her whole frame shook convulsed. I never saw a dog suffer so much from over-exertion. There was water near, and we carried her to it and bathed her head and neck. She had three terrible gashes, the blood from which we could not manage to stanch. Joe was genuinely affected. The tears came into his eyes as he looked on the suffering creature. "Poor little slut!" he said; "I'm doubtful it's her last hunt. Pity we hadn't took the horses, we should ha' bin up sooner, and saved that old savage from 'mercy-creeing' of her. Anyhow, I'll carry her home and see what the missis can do for her."

He did so. I walking sadly behind, the dumb brute looking up at him with grateful eyes, and from time to time licking his hand. She was nursed by Mrs. Burge like a child. We tried all our simple remedies, sewed up the gaping wounds, and even went to the length of a tonic, suited to her condition. But it was of no use. The loss of blood and consequent exhaustion had been too great. Violet died that night, and for the next few days a gloom fell over our little household as at the death of a friend.

A curious spot, in some respects, was that which I had pitched on—full of interest and variety. The

river ran in front of our hut-door, losing itself in wide marshes that marked its entrance to the sea. It was a capital natural paddock, as at a distance of five or six miles the River Hopkins ran parallel to it towards the sea. Neither river was fordable, except at certain points, easily protected. Across the upper portion was a fence, running from river to river, and some ten miles from the sea, put up by the Messrs. Bolden, when this was one of their extensive series of runs, and, indeed, known as the bullock paddock.

Warrnambool, as I before stated, was as yet unborn. There was not an allotment marked or sold, a hut built, a sod turned. No sound in those days broke upon the ear but the ceaseless surge-music; no sight met the eye but the endless forest, the sand-hills, and the long, bright plain of the Pacific Ocean, calm for the most part, but lashed to madness in winter by furious south-easterly gales. Its jetties and warehouses, mayor and municipal council, villas and cottages, fields and gardens, were still in the future. Nought to be seen but the sand-dunes and surges; little to be heard save the sea-bird's cry. But at the old whaling station of Port Fairy the town of Belfast — so named by the late Mr. James Atkinson — had arisen, and its white limestone walls afforded a pleasing contrast to the surrounding forest. It lay between the mouth of the River Moyne and the sea. An open roadstead, suspiciously garnished with wrecks, told a tale of the harbour which afforded a larger element of truth than invitation.

Chief among the pioneers were Messrs. John

Griffiths and Co., who had, for many years, maintained extensive whaling stations on the coast between Port Fairy and Portland.

Captain Campbell, then and long after widely known as Port Fairy Campbell, was their principal superintendent of fleets and fisheries, farms and stores. He, in the pre-land-sale days, like John Mostyn, "bare rule over all that land"; and, moreover, if legends are true, "on those who misliked him he laid strong hand." His sway was for many a league of sea and shore unquestioned, and no "leading case" will carry down his memory to budding barristers. He never, however, relinquished his faith in prompt personal redress, and years afterwards, when harbour-master in Hobson's Bay, regretted to me that the etiquette of the civil service forbade him to convince a contumacious shipmaster by the simple whaling argument. Among his lieutenants, John and Charles Mills held the highest traditional rank. The brothers, natives of Tasmania, were splendid men physically, and as sailors no bolder or better hands ever trod plank or handled oar.

Years afterwards I made one of a crowd assembled on the Port Fairy beach to watch a vessel encountering at her anchors the fury of a south-easterly gale. A wild morning, I trow; the sky red-gloomy with storm-clouds; the fierce tempest beating down the crests of the leaping eager billows; the air full of a concentrated wrath which prevented all sounds save its own from being audible.

It was impossible that the barque could ride the gale out, and, in anticipation, the skipper

had all his sails bent and merely made fast with spun-yarn.

The supreme moment came. After a hurricane-blast which transcended all former air-madness, we saw the vessel quit her position. A hundred voices shouted, "Her anchors are gone!" In an instant, as it seemed to us, every sail was unfurled, and she swung round, with her stem towards the white line of ravening breakers. We had before us the unusual spectacle of a ship with every stitch of canvas set going before the wind, and such a wind, dead on to a lee shore.

Proudly and swift she came gallantly on, while we watched, half-breathless, to see her strike. A sudden pause, a total arrest. The good ship struggled for a space, like a sentient creature in the toils, then broached to, and the wild, triumphant waves broke over her from stem to stern.

But the situation had been foreseen. A dozen willing hands dragged out one of the whaleboats, and what sea ever ran which a whaleboat could not live in? She was safely, though with desperate exertion, launched, and we soon watched her rising and falling amid the tremendous rollers that came thundering in. At her stern was the tall form of Charley Mills standing unmoved with a 16-foot steer oar in his strong grasp, one of the grandest exhibitions of human strength, skill, and courage that eyes ever looked on.

The skipper had carried out his immediate purpose successfully. He had run his vessel in comparatively close, by charging the beach at the pace which he had put on; and in successive trips

of the whaleboat the crew were landed in safety. And though the barque's "ribs and trucks" added another unprepossessing feature to Port Fairy harbour, no greater loss occurred.

Captain John Mills, afterwards harbour-master of the port of Belfast, and long a master mariner in the trade between Belfast and Sydney, was the elder of these two brothers. In his way, also, a grand personage. Not quite so tall as his younger brother, he was fully six feet in height, powerfully built, and a very handsome man to boot. There was an expression of calm courage about his face and general bearing which always reminded one of a lion. He had had, doubtless, as a whaler and voyager to New Zealand and the islands, scores of hairbreadth escapes. After such a stormy life it must have been a wondrous change to settle down, as he did, quietly for the rest of his days in the little village as harbour-master. He is gone to his rest, I think, as well as the grand, stalwart boat-steerer. They will always live in men's minds, I doubt not, on the west coast of Victoria, among the heroes of the storied past. I remember once, indeed, at a great public dinner, when a popular squatter, whose health had been drunk, declared with post-prandial fervour that he regarded all the inhabitants of old Port Fairy as his brothers. During a lull in the cheering, a humorous mercantile celebrity placed his hand on Charles Mills's shoulder, and cried aloud, "This is my brother Charley"—a practical application which brought down the house.

Ah! those were indeed the good old days.

How free and fresh was the ocean's breath as one looked westward over the limitless Pacific, where nothing broke the line of vision nearer than Lady Julia Percy Island! How green was the turf! How blue the sky! How strong and unquestioning was friendship! How divine was love "in that lost land, in that lost clime"—in the realm of poesy and the kingdom of youth!

Port Fairy certainly had the start in life, and Belfast was, as I have narrated, a townlet before an acre of land was sold in Warrnambool. But it turned out that Warrnambool was situated in nearer vicinity to the wonderfully rich lands of Farnham and Purnim. The great wheat and potato yields began to affect shipments, and at this day I rather fancy nearly all the mercantile prosperity has taken lodgings with Warrnambool, while the broad, limestone-metalled streets of Belfast are less lively than they were wont to be a score of years agone.

To the Johnny Griffiths dynasty succeeded that of Mr. John Cox, the younger, of Clarendon, Tasmania, a worthy scion of a family which had furnished, perhaps, more pattern country gentlemen to Australia than any other. He had quitted Tasmania for the western portion of the new colony, which promised wider scope for energy and enterprise. His earlier investments were a trading station at Port Fairy, the purchase of such town allotments and buildings as seemed to him likely bargains, and the first occupation of the Mount Rouse station, long afterwards known as perhaps the choicest, richest run of a crack district.

Mr. Cox, however, relinquished his not wholly

congenial mercantile task to the late Mr. William Rutledge, of Farnham Park, whose commercial talent and business energy soon made quite another place of Belfast. Mr. Cox from that time forth devoted himself wholly to pastoral pursuits, and having been unhandsomely evicted from Mount Rouse, which the Governor, without much practical wisdom, wished to turn into an aboriginal reservation, he retired to Mount Napier, a run only second in extent and quality.

I may mention that some years after, the Government, finding that the aboriginal protectorate system merely served to localise gangs of lazy and mischievous savages without any sort of benefit to themselves or others, revoked the reserve. But instead of handing back the land to those from whom it had been taken unjustly, they had the meanness to let it by tender. This run of Mount Rouse brought a rental of £900 per annum, a price altogether unprecedented in the history of pastoral leases.

After I had been a dweller on the banks of the Merai for a few months, I resolved to move farther westward, where there was country to spare and a more favourable opportunity of getting an extensive run than in my present picturesque but restricted locality. I was grieved to lose my pretty and pleasant home just as I had begun to get attached to it, but I judged rightly that to the westward lay the more profitable pastures, and I adhered to my resolution.

A few days' muster saw us once more on the road. Our herd was increased and complicated by

the presence of many small calves, of ages varying from a week to three months. These tender travellers would have much retarded our march under other circumstances. But we had not, as luck would have it, much more than fifty miles to move, and for that short distance we could afford to travel easily, and give time to the weaker ones. All our worldly goods were packed upon the dray, which, as before, sufficed to carry them.

CHAPTER IV

DUNMORE

By this time the winter rains had commenced to fall. The wild weather of the western coast, with fierce gales from the south-east, and driving storms of sleet, showed clearly that "the year had turned." The roads were knee-deep in mud, the creeks full, the nights long and cold. However, grass was plentiful, and

> Little cared we for wind or weather,
> When Youth and I lived "there" together.

So away. *Vogue la galère.* The dray, with Joe Burge and his wife, and Chase, the deerhound, went on ahead, while I, with Mr. Cunningham, a new companion, who had dwelt in those parts before my arrival, was to follow a day or two later with the herd.

I had made a small exploring expedition a short time before in company with an old stockman; he, for a consideration, had guided me to a tract of unoccupied country. And to this new territory our migration was now tending. This experienced stock-rider—"an old hand from the Sydney side,"

as such men were then called in Victoria—was a great character, and a most original personage. He accompanied the dray, so that all might be in readiness for our arrival. Not that much could be done. But my all-accomplished chief servitor, the most inventive and energetic pioneer possible, would be sure to make some "improvements" even in the short interval before we arrived.

Our first day's journey was most difficult. The cattle were loath to leave the spot to which they had become accustomed, and were troublesome to drive. However, with two good stock-whips, and the aid of Dora the cattle-dog, we got along, and reached Rosebrook, on the Moyne, close to Belfast. Mr. Roderick Urquhart, as manager for Mr. James Atkinson, was then in charge. He received us most hospitably. The cattle were put into the stock-yard for the night. My companion rode on to town, intending to rejoin me early in the morning.

One may judge of the difficulty in "locating" tenants upon agricultural land in those early days from the fact that Mr. Urquhart was then supplying the first farmers on the Belfast survey with rations. For the first year or two this plan was pursued; after that they were able, doubtless, to keep themselves and pay the moderate rent under which they sat. Not that the Port Fairy "survey" was so fertile as that of Farnham Park—much of it was wet and undrained, much stony, and but fit for pasture; but it comprehended the greater part of the town of Belfast, and £5000 would not be considered dear now for 5000 acres, chiefly of first-class pasture land, comprising, besides a seaport town, an exhaust-

less quarry of limestone, a partially navigable river, and a harbour.

I slept ill that night, oppressed by my responsibilities. At midnight I heard the continuous lowing, or "roaring" in stock-riders' vernacular, which denoted the escape of my cattle from the yard. Dressing hastily, I stumbled in pitch darkness through the knee-deep mud. It was even as I feared—the rails were down, trampled in the mud; the cattle were out and away. My anxiety was great. The paddock was insecure. If they got out of it there was endless re-mustering, delay, and perhaps loss.

I could do nothing on foot. I heard the uneasy brutes trampling and bellowing in all directions. I went to bed sad at heart, and, like St. Paul's crew at Malta, "wished for the dawn."

With the earliest streak of light I caught my horse, and galloped round the paddock without a sight of the missing animals. In despair I turned towards the shore of the large salt-water lagoon which made one side of the enclosure. In the grey light I fancied I saw a dark mass at the end of a cape, which stretched far into it. I rode for it at full speed, and discovered my lost "stock-in-trade" all lying down in the long marshy grass. They had struck out straight for their last known place of abode, but had been blocked by the deep water and the unknown sea—as doubtless the lagoon appeared to them in the darkness.

Shortly after breakfast we resumed our journey, and made St. Kitts, a cattle station some ten or twelve miles on the western side of Belfast. The

Messrs. Aplin were there, having taken it up a year before. The stock-yard was more substantial, as became a cattle station. Our hosts were cultured and refined people, not long from England; like myself, enthusiastic about pastoral pleasures and profits. All our work lay ahead. How bright was the outlook! how dim and distant the shoals and quicksands of life's sea! We sat long into the night, talking a good deal of shop, not wholly unmingled with higher topics. I remember we decided that cattle stations were to improve in value, and ultimately lead to a competence. How little could we foresee that the elder brother was to die as resident magistrate at Somerset—an unborn town in an unknown colony—and the younger, after nearly thirty years' unsuccessful gold-mining, from Suttor's Mill to Hokitiki, was to make a fortune in tin at Stanthorpe! That the writer—bah! "Fate's dark web unfolded, lying," did not keep him from the soundest sleep that night; and we again made a successful morning start.

The start was good, but the day was discouraging. The cattle were safe enough in the new yard, though rather bedraggled after twelve hours of mud up to their knees. However, there was water enough where they were going to wash them up to the horns, and the grass was magnificent. The rain came down in a way that was oppressive to our spirits. The sky was murky; the air chilling. Our whips soon became sodden and ineffective. My companion had a bad cold, which deprived him of all of his voice and most of his temper. The dog Dora would hardly bark. Worse than all, the track

was difficult to find. We drove hard for hours, doubting much whether we had not lost our way. My comrade was sure of it. And

> It was about the filthy close
> Of a most disgusting day,

as a somewhat irreverent poetaster hath it, when we disputed in the gathering gloom as to whether or not we were miles distant from Dunmore—our port of refuge—or had really hit off the right track. My friend, in hoarse boding tones, commenced to speculate as to how we should pass the night under a steady rainfall, and how many miles off, in different directions, the cattle would be by morning. My answer was simple but effective—"There's the horse-paddock!" It was even so. Straining my eyes, I had caught sight through the timber of a two-railed sapling fence. It was enough. Paddocks were not then five miles square, and as likely to be twenty miles from the homestead as one. Dear labour and limited credit militated against reckless outlay in posts and rails. A 100-acre enclosure for horses and working bullocks was all that was then deemed necessary. To see the paddock was to see the house.

A considerable "revulsion of feeling" took place with both of us as we slogged the tired cattle round the fence and came in view of the old Dunmore homestead, then considered one of the best improved in the district. To be sure, it would not make much show now beside Burrabogie or Groongal, let alone Ercildoune or Trawalla, and a few others in the west. But then some of the shepherd kings thought

it no dishonour to sleep in a watch-box for a month at a time, and a slab gunyah with a fold of hurdles was held to be sufficient improvement for a medium sheep station. At Dunmore there were three substantial slab huts with huge stone chimneys, a *pisé*-work dairy, a loose-box for Traveller, the son of Camerton, as well as a large milking-yard and cow-shed. A great dam across the River Shaw provided an ornamental sheet of water.

The season was, as I have stated, verging on midwinter. The day was wet. The drove of milkers passing and repassing had converted the ground outside of the huts, which were protected by the paddock fence, into a sea of mud, depth from one foot to two feet. Through this we approached the yard. If I live to be a hundred I shall never forget the sight which now met my astonished eyes. A gentleman emerged from the principal building in conspicuously clean raiment, having apparently just arrayed himself for the evening meal. He proceeded calmly to wade through the mud-ocean until he reached the yard, where he took down the clay-beplastered rails, leaving the gate open for our cattle. I declare I nearly fainted with grateful emotion at this combination of self-sacrifice with the loftiest ideal of hospitality. We had never met before either; but long years of after-friendship with James Irvine only enabled me to perceive that it was the natural outcome of a generous nature and a heart loyal to every impulse of gentle blood.

Another night's mud for the poor cattle. But I reflected that the next day would see them enfranchised, and on their own "run." So, dismissing the

subject from my mind, I followed my chivalrous host to the guests' hut—a snug, separate building, where we made our simple toilettes with great comfort and satisfaction. After some cautious walking on a raised pathway we gained the "house," where I was introduced to Messrs. Campbell and Macknight—for the firm was a triumvirate.

Dwelling in a drought-afflicted district across the border, where for months the milk question had been in abeyance, or feebly propped up by the imported Swiss product, and where butter is not, how it refreshes one to recall the great jug of cream which graced that comfortable board, the pats of fresh butter, the alluring short-cake, the baronial sirloin. How we feasted first. How we talked round the glowing log-piled fire afterwards. How we slept under piles of blankets till sunrise.

Mrs. Teviot, the housekeeper, peerless old Scottish dame that she was (has not Henry Kingsley immortalised her?); for how many a year did she provide for the comforts of host and guest unapproachably, unimpeachably. How indelibly is that evening imprinted on my memory. Marked with a white stone in life's not all-cheerful record. On that evening was commenced a friendship that only closed with life, and which knew for the whole of its duration neither cloud nor misgiving. If a man's future is ever determined by the character of his associates and surroundings at a critical period of life, my vicinity to Dunmore must have powerfully influenced mine. In close, almost daily, association with men of high principle, great energy, early culture, and refined habits, I could not fail to gain

signal benefit, to imbibe elevated ideas, to share broad and ennobling ideas of colonisation.

As soon as we could see next morning the cattle were let out and "tailed" on the thick, rich pasturage, which surrounded every homestead in those good old days. After breakfast I set out to find my station; that is, the exact spot where it had pleased my retainers to camp. I found them about seven miles westward of Dunmore, on a cape of lightly-timbered land which ran into the great Eumeralla marsh; a corresponding point of the lava country, popularly known as The Rocks, jutted out to meet it. On this was a circular pond-like depression, where old Tom, my venerable guide and explorer, had in a time of drought once seen a dingo drinking. He had christened it the Native Dog Hole—a name which it bears to this day. And at the Doghole-point had my man Joe Burge commenced to fell timber for a brush-yard, put up the walls of a sod hut, unpacked such articles as would not suffer from weather, and generally commenced the first act of homestead occupation. I was greeted with enthusiasm. And as Old Tom the stock-rider was at once despatched to Dunmore to bring over the cattle, with Mr. Cunningham, my friend and travelling companion, I hobbled out my charger and proceeded to inspect my newly-acquired territory.

CHAPTER V

SQUATTLESEA MERE

PRIDE and successful ambition swelled my breast on that first morning as I looked round on my run. My run! my own station! How fine a sound it had, and how fine a thing it was that I should have the sole occupancy—almost ownership—of about 50,000 acres of "wood and wold," mere and marshland, hill and dale. It was all my own—after a fashion—that is, I had but to receive my squatting license, under the hand of the Governor of the Australias, for which I paid ten pounds, and no white man could in any way disturb, harass, or dispossess me. I have that first license yet, signed by Sir Charles Fitzroy, the Governor-General. It was a valuable document in good earnest, and many latter-day pastoralists with a "Thursday to Thursday" tenure would be truly glad to have such another. There were no free-selectors in those days. No one could buy land except at auction when once the special surveys had been abrogated. There were no travelling reserves, or water reserves, or gold-fields, or mineral licenses, or miners' rights, or

any of the new-fangled contrivances for letting the same land to half a dozen people at one and the same time.

There was nothing which some people would consider to be romantic or picturesque in the scenery on which I gazed. But the "light which never was on sea or shore" *was there*, to shed a celestial glory over the untilled, unfenced, half-unknown waste. Westward stretched the great marshes, through which the Eumeralla flowed, if, indeed, that partially subterranean stream could be said to run or flow anywhere. Northward lay the lava-bestrewn country known as the Mount Eeles rocks, a mass of cooled and cracked lava now matted with a high thick sward of kangaroo grass, but so rough and sharp were the piles and plateaux of scoria that it was dangerous to ride a horse over it. For years after we preferred to work it on foot with the aid of dogs.

On the south lay open slopes and low hills, with flats between. On these last grew the beautiful umbrageous blackwood, or native hickory, one of the handsomest trees in Australia. At the back were again large marshes, with heathy flats and more thickly-timbered forests. Over all was a wonderful sward of grass, luxuriant and green at the time I speak of, and quite sufficient, as I thought, for the sustenance of two or three thousand head of mixed cattle.

There were no great elevations to be seen. It was one of the "low countries" in a literal sense. The only hill in view was that of Mount Eeles, which we could see rising amid the lava levels a few miles to the north-west. The marshes were for the most

part free from timber. But a curious formation of "islands," as the stock-rider called them, prevailed, which tended much to the variety and beauty of the landscape.

These were isolated areas, of from ten to one hundred acres, raised slightly above the ordinary winter level of the marshes. The soil on these "islands" was exceptionally good, and, from the fact of their being timbered like the ordinary mainland, they afforded an effective contrast to the miles of water or waving reeds of which the marshes consisted. They served admirably also for cattle camps. To them the cattle always retired at noonday in summer, and at night in winter and spring-time. One "island," not very far from our settlement, was known as "Kennedy's island," the gallant ill-fated explorer who had surveyed a road to the town of Portland some years before my arrival having made his camp there. How far he was to wander from the pleasant green west country, only to die by the spear of a crouching savage, within sight of the ship that had been sent to bring him safely home after his weary desert trail!

We didn't know anything of the nature of dry country in those days. All the land I looked upon was deep-swarded, thickly-verdured as an English meadow. Wild duck swam about in the pools and meres of the wide misty fen, with its brakes of tall reeds and "marish-marigolds"—"the sword-grass and the oat-grass and the bulrush by the pool." Overhead long strings of wild swan clanged and swayed. There were wild beasts (kangaroo and dingoes), Indians (blacks, whose fires in "[illegible]cks" we

could see), a pathless waste, and absolute freedom and independence. These last were the most precious possessions of all. No engagements, no office work, no fixed hours, no sums or lessons of any kind or sort. I felt as if this splendid Robinson Crusoe kind of life was too good to be true. Who was I that I should have had this grand inheritance of happiness immeasurable made over to me? What a splendid world it was, to be sure! Why did people ever repine or complain? I should have made short work of Mr. Mallock, and have settled the argument "Is life worth living?" had it then arisen between us, with more haste than logic. Action, however, must in colonisation never fail to accompany contemplation. To which end I returned to our camp, just in time to partake of the simple, but appetising, meal which Mrs. Burge had prepared for us.

Cold corned beef, hot tea, and a famous fresh damper, the crust of which I still hold to be better than any other species of bread whatever, when accompanied, as in the case referred to, with good, sweet, fresh butter. How splendid one's appetite was after hours spent in the fresh morning air. How complete the satisfaction when it all came to an end.

Then commenced a council of war, in which Joe Burge was a leading spokesman. "Old Tom can look after the cattle. Mr. Cunningham and I will go and fell a tree. I know one handy that'll run out nigh on a hundred slabs, and if you'll bring up the bullocks and dray to the stump, sir, to-night, we'll have a load of slabs ready to take home."

What was the next thing that was necessary to be done?

To build a house.

At present we were living under a dray. Now, a dray is not so bad a covering at night, when extremely sleepy and tired, but in daylight it is valueless. And if it rains—and in the west it often did, and I am informed does still, though not so hard as it did then—the want of a permanent shelter makes itself felt.

The walls of a sod hut were indeed already up. Clean-cut black cubes, rather larger than bricks, when new and moist, make a neat, solid wall. In little more than a day we had a thatched roof completed, so that we were able to have our evening meal in comfort, and even luxury. A couple of fixed bedsteads were placed at opposite corners, in which Mr. Cunningham and I arranged our bedding. Joe Burge and his wife still slept under the "body" of the dray, while Old Tom had a separate section allotted to him under the pole.

But the "hut," of split slabs, with wall-plate top and bottom, and all the refinements of bush carpentry, was to be the real mansion. And at this we soon made a commencement. I say we, because I drove the bullocks and carted the slabs to the site we had pitched on, besides doing a bit of squaring and adzing now and then.

Joe Burge and Mr. Cunningham (who was an experienced bushman, and half a dozen other things to boot) soon "ran out" slabs enough, and fitted the round stuff, most of which I carted in, preferring that section of industry to the all-day, every-day work of splitting. Old Tom looked after the cattle. They needed all his attention for a while, displaying, as

they did, a strong desire to march incontinently back to the banks of the Merai.

In two or three weeks the hut was up. How I admired it! The door, the table, the bedsteads, the chairs (three-legged stools), the washstand, were all manufactured by Joe Burge out of the all-sufficing "slab" of the period. A wooden chimney with an inner coating of stone-work worked well without smoking. The roof was neatly thatched with the tall, strong tussock-grass, then so abundant.

Our dwelling transcended that of the lowland Scot, who described his as "a lairge hoose wi' twa rooms intil't," inasmuch as it boasted of three. One was the atrium—being also used as a refectory—and chief general apartment. The rest of the building was bisected by a wooden partition, affording thus two bedrooms. One of these was devoted to Joe Burge and family, the other I appropriated. Mr. Cunningham and Old Tom slept in the large room, where—firewood being plentiful—they kept up a roaring fire, and had rather the best of it in the cold nights which then commenced to visit us.

Excepting a stock-yard, there now remained next to nothing to do, and being rather overmanned for so small a station, Mr. Cunningham, with my free consent, elected to take service with the Dunmore firm, with whom he remained for some years after. I had now attained the acme of worldly felicity. I had always longed to have a station of my own. Now I had one. I had daily work of the kind that exactly suited me. I went over to Dunmore and spent a pleasant evening every now and then, rubbing up my classics and having a little "good talk." I

had a few books which I had brought up with me in the dray—Byron, Scott, Shakespeare (there was no Macaulay in those days), with half a score of other authors, in whom there was *pabulum mentis* for a year or two. I had, besides, the run of the Dunmore library—no mean collection.

So I had work, recreation, companionship, and intellectual occupation provided for me in abundant and wholesome proportion. What else could cast a shadow over my prosperous present and promising future? Well, there was one factor in the sum which I had not reckoned with. "The Amalekite was then in the land," and with the untamed, untutored pre-Adamite it appeared that I was fated to have trouble.

The aboriginal blacks on and near the western coast of Victoria—near Belfast, Warrnambool, and Portland—had always been noted as a breed of savages by no means to be despised. They had been for untold generations accustomed to a dietary scale of exceptional liberality. The climate was temperate; the forests abounded in game; wild-fowl at certain seasons were plentiful; while the sea supplied them with fish of all sorts and sizes, from a whale (stranded) to a whitebait. No wonder that they were a fine race, physically and otherwise—the men tall and muscular, the women well-shaped and fairly good-looking. To some even higher commendation might with truth be applied.

One is often tempted to smile at hearing some under-sized Anglo-Saxon, with no brain power to spare, assert gravely the blacks of Australia were the lowest race of savages known to exist, the connect-

ing link between man and the brute creation, etc. On the contrary, many of the leading members of tribes known to the pioneer squatters were grandly-formed specimens of humanity, dignified in manner, and possessing an intelligence by no means to be despised, comprehending a quick sense of humour, as well as a keenness of perception, not always found in the superior race.

Unfortunately, before I arrived and took up my abode on the border of the great Eumeralla mere, there had been divers quarrels between the old race and the new. Whether the stockmen and shepherds were to blame—as is always said—or whether it was simply the ordinary savage desire for the tempting goods and chattels of the white man, cannot be accurately stated. Anyhow, cattle and sheep had been lifted and speared; blacks had been shot, as a matter of course; then, equally so, hut-keepers, shepherds, and stockmen had been done to death.

Just about that time there was a scare as to the disappearance of a New South Wales semi-civilised aboriginal named Bradbury. He was a daring fellow, a bold rider, and a good shot. As he occasionally stayed at the native camp, and had now not been seen for a month, it began to be rumoured that he had agreed to accept the leadership of the outlawed tribes against the whites. In such a case the prospects of the winter, with thinly-manned homesteads eight or ten miles apart, looked decidedly bad.

However, the discovery of poor Bradbury's bones a short time afterwards set that matter at rest. He always took his gun with him, distrusting—and with

good reason—his trans-Murray kin. On this occasion they "laid for him," it seems, and by means of a sable Delilah, who playfully ran off with his double-barrel, took him at a disadvantage. He fought desperately, we were told, even with a spear through his body, but was finally overpowered. Just before they had killed and chopped up a hut-keeper, and at Mount Rouse they had surprised and killed one of Mr. Cox's men, the overseer—Mr. Brock—only saving himself by superior speed of foot, for which he was noted.

I was recommended by my good friends of Dunmore and others of experience to keep the blacks at a distance, and not to give them permission to come about the station.

Being young and foolish—or, let me say, unsuspicious—I chose to disregard this warning and to take my own way. I thought the poor fellows had been hardly treated. It was their country, after all. A policy of conciliation would doubtless show them that some of the white men had their good at heart.

To the westward of our camp lay the great tract of lava country before mentioned. This had been doubtless an outflow in old central-fire days from the crater of Mount Eeles. Now, cooled, hardened, cracked, and decomposed, it annually produced a rich crop of grass. It was full of ravines, boulders, masses of scoria, and had, besides, a lakelet in the centre. It was many miles across, and extended from Mount Eeles nearly to the sea.

It was not particularly easy to walk in. And, as for riding, one day generally saw the end of the most high-couraged, sure-footed horse. As a natural covert for savages it could not be surpassed.

In this peculiar region our "Modocs lay hid." We could see the smoke of their camp fires in tolerable number, but had no means of seeing or having speech of them. One day, however, having probably sent out a scout previously who had made careful examination of us while we were totally unconscious of any such supervision, they debouched from the rocks and came up to camp. They sent a herald in advance, who held up a green bough. Then, "walking delicately," they came up, in number nearly fifty. I was at home, as it happened, as also was the old stockman. How well I remember the day and the scene!

We all carried guns in those days, as might the border settlers in "Injun" territory.

CHAPTER VI

THE EUMERALLA WAR

WE had been informed that the Eumeralla people, when that station was first taken up by Mr. Hunter for Hughes and Hoskins, of Sydney, always took their guns into the milking-yard with them, for fear of a surprise. The story went that one day a sudden attack "was" made. While the main body was engaged, a wing of the invading force made a flank movement, and bore down upon the apparently undefended homestead. There, however, they were confronted by Mr. William Carmichael, a neighbour of Falstaffian proportions, who stood in the doorway brandishing a rusty cutlass which he had discovered. Whether the blacks were demoralised by the appearance of the fattest man they had ever seen, or awe-stricken at the fierceness of his bearing, is not known, but they wheeled and fled just as their main army had concluded to fall back on Mount Eeles.

Of Messrs. Gorrie and M'Gregor (uncle and nephew), who were chief among the Eumeralla pioneers, having come down with the original herd of ITH cattle, with which the run was first occupied,

many tales are told. The former, a stalwart, iron-nerved, elderly Scot, was the envied possessor of a rifle of great length of barrel and the deadliest performance. The coolness of its owner under fire (of spears) was a matter of legendary lore.

In a raid upon the heathen, shortly after an unprovoked murder on their part, two aboriginals bolted out of their cover immediately in front of Mr. Gorrie. Running their best, and leaping from side to side as they went, the nearer one made frantic signs to the effect that the other man was the real culprit.

"Bide a wee," quoth the calm veteran, as the barrel of the old rifle settled to its aim. "Bide a wee, laddie, and I'll sort ye baith." Which the legend goes on to say he actually did, disposing of the appellant at sight, and knocking over the other before he got out of range of *la longue carabine.*

One day Mr. M'Gregor was returning through disturbed country. While discovering "Injun sign" to be tolerably plain and recent, his horse at speed fell under him, and rolled over, a tremendous cropper. He picked himself up, and, going over to the motionless steed, found that he was stone dead—he had broken both forelegs and his neck. A moment's thought, and he picked up the saddle and bridle, and, thus loaded, ran the seven or eight miles home at a pace which Deerfoot would have respected.

Things went on prosperously for some months. "The hut," a substantial and commodious structure, arose in all its grandeur. It boasted loopholes on either side of the huge, solid chimney, built out of the cube-shaped basaltic blocks which lay around in

profusion. So we were prepared for a siege. A stock-yard was the next necessity; to split and put up this important adjunct, without which we had no real title to call ourselves a cattle station, was imperative. "Four rails and a cap," as the description ran, of the heavy substantial fence then thought necessary for the business, were to be procured. The white-gum timber, though good enough in a splitting sense for slabs, was not the thing for stock-yard work. So, as we knew by report from the "Eumeralla people" that there was a tract of stringy-bark forest about eight miles south of us towards the coast, we determined to get our timber there. The bushman who had put up the Eumeralla huts—one Tinker Woods, an expatriated gipsy, it was said, whom therefore I regarded with great interest—had marked some trees which would serve to guide us. Joe Burge thought he could manage the rest.

The "round stuff" we could cut close about. But the heavy rails, nine feet in length, from three to five inches thick, and as straight as a board paling, we had to get from the forest. As Mr. Cunningham had gone, and the old stockman, Tom, had quite enough to do minding the cattle, the work fell on Joe Burge and myself.

This is how it was managed. At daylight we started one Monday morning, taking the dray and team, with maul and wedges, crosscut saw and axes, bedding, blankets, and a week's rations, not forgetting the guns. When we got to the forest, after finding the Tinker's Tree (it bore the name years after)—an immense stringy bark, with a section of the outside wood split down to see if the grain was free—we

soon pitched upon a "good straight barrel," and set to work. Joe cut a good-sized "calf" in it first, and then we introduced the crosscut. I had got through a reasonable amount of manual exercise, and had more than one spell, when the tall tree began to sway, and, as we drew back to the right side of the stump, came crashing down, flattening all the lighter timber in its way.

"Now, sir," quoth Joe, "you give me a hand to crosscut the first length. There'll be two more after that. Them I'll do myself, and now we'll have a pot of tea. You can take the team home, and come back the day after to-morrow. I'll have a load of rails ready for you."

We had our meal in great comfort and contentment. Then I started off to drive the team back. At sunset I saw the thatched roof of our hut. I had walked sixteen miles there and back, besides helping to fell our tree, and unyoking the team afterwards.

I slept soundly that night. I drove the team back to the forest on the day named, and found Joe perfectly well and contented, having split up the whole of the tree into fine, straight, substantial rails, thirty of which were put upon the dray. After helping to cut down another tree, I departed on my homeward journey.

On Saturday the same proceedings took place, and *da capo* until all the rails were split and drawn in. Joe must have felt pretty lonely at night, camped in a bark gunyah, with the black pillars of the stringy-bark trees around him, and not a soul within reach or ken. But he was not of a nervous temperament—by wood or wold, land or sea, on foot

or horseback, hand-to-hand fight, sword or pistol, it was all one to Joe. He was afraid of nothing and nobody. And when, years after, his son returned from India with the Queen's Commission and the Victoria Cross, I knew where the bold blood had come from. Towards the end of our wood-ranging, a rumour got abroad that the blacks had "broken out" and commenced to spear cattle. They had, moreover, "intromitted with the Queen's lieges," as Dugald Dalgetty would have said. Mr. Cunningham, riding through the greenwood at Dunmore, had had three spears thrown at him by blacks, one of which went through his hat. They then (he averred) disappeared into an "impenetrable scrub." Neighbours talked of arming and going out in force to expostulate, if this kind of thing was to go on.

I told Joe of this, and brought a message from Mrs. Burge to say that Old Tom, who knew the blacks well, was getting anxious, that he must not stay away any longer, but had better come home with me.

Joe agreed generally, but said there was one lovely, straight tree that he *must* run out, and if I would help him fell this, he would come directly it was finished. I tried to persuade him, but it was useless. So we "threw" the tree, and loaded up. I started home again alone.

Now the tree was a large tree; the load heavier than usual. My departure was late in consequence, and the moon rose before I had half finished my homeward journey. To add to my trouble I got into a soft spot in the marsh road, and in the altercation one of my leaders, a hot-tempered animal, slued

round and "turned his yoke." Gentlemen who have driven teams will understand the situation. The bows were by this manœuvre placed on the tops of the bullocks' necks, the yoke underneath, and the off-side bullock became the near-side one. I was nearly in despair. I dared not unyoke them, because they, being fresh, would have bolted and left me helpless. So I compromised, and started the team, finding that by keeping pretty wide of my leaders and behaving with patience they would keep the track. The road was moderately open, and they knew they were going home.

At one part of the road I had to pass between two walls of ti-tree, a tall kind of scrub through which I could not see, and which looked in the moonlight very dark and eerie. I began to think about the blacks, and whether or no they might attack us in force. At that very moment I heard a wild shrill cry, which considerably accelerated the circulatory system.

I sprang to the gun, which lay alongside of the rail, just within the side-board of the dray. "I will sell my life dearly," I said to myself; "but oh! if it must be—shall I never see home again?" As I pulled back the hammer another cry, hardly so shrill —much more melodious, indeed, to my ears—sounded, and a flock of low-flying dark birds passed over my head. It was the cry of the wild swan! I was not sorry when I saw the hut fire, and drew up with my load near the yard. I had some trouble with my leader, the off-side bullock not caring to let me approach him, as is the manner of his kind. But I got over the difficulty, and dealt out retributive

justice by letting him and his mate go in their yoke, and postponing further operations to daylight.

Mrs. Burge was most anxious about her husband, and inveighed against his foolishly putting his life in jeopardy for a few rails. Old Tom laughed, and said as long as Joe had a good gun he was a match for all the blacks in the country, if they did not take him by surprise.

"We're going to have a bit of trouble with these black varment now," he said, filling his pipe in a leisurely way. "Once they've started killing cattle they won't leave off in a hurry. More by token, they might take a fancy to tackle the hut some day when we're out."

"You leave me a gun, then," said Mrs. Burge, "and I'll be able to frighten 'em a bit if I'm left by myself. But sure, I hardly think they'd touch me after all the flour and bits of things I've given the lubras."

"They're quare people," said the old stockman, meditatively; "there's good and bad among 'em, but the divil resave the blackfellow I'd trust nearer than I could pull the trigger on him, if he looked crooked."

I said little, being vexed that my policy of conciliation had been of no avail. I roused myself, however, out of a reverie on the curious problem afforded by original races of mankind, foredoomed to perish at the approach of higher law.

"They have not touched any of our cattle yet," I said; "that shows they have some feeling of gratitude."

"I wouldn't say that," answered the old man,

"I missed a magpie steer to-day, and I didn't see that fat yellow cow with the white flank. Thim's a pair that's always together, and I seen all the leading mob barrin' the two."

"We must have a hunt for them to-morrow," I said, "and the sooner Joe comes in the better, Mrs. Burge."

"Yes, indeed," said that resolute matron, casting a glance at the cradle where lay a plump infant not many weeks old; "and is there any other man in the country that would risk his life for a load of stock-yard rails? Not but it's elegant timber; only he might think of me and the baby."

The argument was a good one, so next day I went out and forcibly brought away Joe and a final cargo of rails, though to the last he asserted "that we were spoiling the yard for the sake of another week's splitting."

I may here state that we got our stock-yard up in due time. It was seven feet high, and close enough—a rat could hardly get through. My share was chiefly the mortising of the huge posts, which afforded considerable scope for amateur execution, by reason of their size and thickness. If the yard is still standing—and nothing less than a stampede of elephants would suffice to level it—I could pick out several of "my posts" with unerring accuracy. "God be with those days," as the Irish idiom runs; they were happy and free. I should like to be drafting there again—if the clock could be put back. But life's time-keeper murmurs sadly with rhythmic pendulum, "Never—for ever: for ever—never!"

All of a sudden war broke out. The reasons for

this last resource of nations none could tell. The whites only wished to be let alone. They did not treat the black brother unkindly. Far from it. There were other philanthropists in the district besides myself, notably Mr. James Dawson, of Kangatong, then known as Cox's Heifer Station, distant about twenty miles to the east. Then, as now, my old friend and his amiable family were most anxious to ameliorate his condition. They fed and clothed the lubras and children. They even were sufficiently interested to make a patient study of the language, and to acquire a knowledge of tribal rites, ceremonies, and customs, which has lately been embodied in a valuable volume, praised even by the super-critical *Saturday Review*. It is a fact, not altogether without bearing on the historical analysis of pioneer squatting, that four of us—rude colonists, as most English writers persist in believing all Australian settlers to be—were, in greater or less degree, authors.

Charles Macknight had a logically clear and trenchant way of putting things. As a political and social essayist he attracted much attention during the latter years of his life. His theories of stock-breeding, culled from contemporary journals, are still prized and acted upon by experienced pastoralists. Of the two brothers Aplin, the elder was a lover of scientific research, and, having a strong natural taste for geology, addressed himself to it with such perseverance that he became second only to Mr. Selwyn, the late Victorian Government geologist, a man of European reputation, and was himself enabled to fill the position of Government

geologist for Northern Queensland. His brother Dyson was a poet of by no means ordinary calibre. Mr. Dawson's book is now before the public, and the present writer has more than one book or two to his credit, which the public have been good enough to read, and reviewers to praise.

Before I begin my history of the smaller Sepoy Rebellion, I must introduce Mr. Robert Craufurd, younger, of Ardmillan, a brother of the late Lord Ardmillan. This gentleman dwelt at Eumeralla East, a subdivision of the original run, which, in my time, was the property of the late Mr. Benjamin Boyd. The river divided the two runs. Messrs. Gorrie and M'Gregor had acquired Eumeralla West, with its original homestead and improvements, by what we should call in the present day something very like "jumping." However, I had no better claim to the Doghole-point, which was a part of the old Eumeralla run—as indeed was Dunmore and all the country within twenty or thirty miles—if the original occupant of that station was to be believed. The commissioner—the gallant and autocratic Captain Fyans—settled the matter, as was the wont of those days, by his resistless *fiat*. He "gave" Messrs. Gorrie and M'Gregor the western side of the Eumeralla, with the homestead and the best fattening country. He restricted Mr. Boyd to the eastern side of the river, giving him his choice, however. That was the reason why Tinker Woods had to build new huts; and he eventually allotted to me Squattlesea Mere, and its dependencies, as far as the Doghole-point, though my friend, Bob Craufurd, on behalf

of his employer, strove stoutly to have me turned out.

Mr. Craufurd, like other cadets of good family, had somewhat swiftly got rid of the capital which he imported, and, for lack of other occupation, accepted the berth of manager of Eumeralla East for Mr. Boyd, and a very good manager he was. A fine horseman, shrewd, clear-headed, and energetic on occasion, he did better for that enterprising ill-fated capitalist than he ever did for himself. He and the Dunmore people were old friends and schoolfellows. So, it may be guessed that we often found it convenient to exchange our somewhat lonely and homely surroundings for the comparative luxury and refinement of Dunmore. What grand evenings we used to have there!

He was a special humourist. I often catch myself now laughing at one of "Craufurd's stories"—an inveterate practical joker, a thorough sportsman, a fair scholar, and scribbler of *jeux d'esprit*, he was the life and soul of our small community. He once counterfeited a warrant, which he caused to be served on Mr. Cunningham for an alleged shooting of a blackfellow. Even that bold Briton turned pale (and a more absolutely fearless man I never knew) when he found himself, as he supposed, within the iron gripe of the law.

We were all pretty good shots. For one reason or other the gun was rarely a day out of our hands. We were therefore in a position to do battle effectively for our homesteads and means of subsistence if these were assailed. Between my abode and the sea was but one other run—a cattle station. Sheep

were in the minority in those days. It was occupied by two brothers—the Messrs. Jamieson—Scots also; they seemed to preponderate in the west. Their run rejoiced in the aspiring title of Castle Donnington. It was rather thickly timbered, possessed a good deal of limestone formation, and had a frontage to Darlot's Creek, an ever-flowing true river which there ran into the sea.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHILDREN OF THE ROCKS

MR. LEARMONTH had taken up Ettrick and Ellangowan, a few miles higher up on the same creek, about the same time that I "sat down" on the Lower Eumeralla. This gentleman, since an officer of high rank in the volunteer force, had lately come from Tasmania, whence he brought some valuable blood mares, with which he founded a stud in after years. The cattle run comprised a good deal of lava country. It was there that Bradbury, the civilised aboriginal before mentioned, met his death. All the land that lay between Eumeralla proper and the sea, a tract of country of some twenty or thirty miles square, had been probably from time immemorial a great hunting-ground and rendezvous for the surrounding tribes. It was no doubt eminently fitted for such a purpose. It swarmed with game, and in the spring was one immense preserve of every kind of wild fowl and wild animal that the country owned.

Among the Rocks there were innumerable caves, depressions, and hiding-places of all kinds, in which the natives had been used to find secure retreat and

safe hiding in days gone by. Whether they could not bear to surrender to the white man these cherished solitudes, or whether it was the short-sighted, childish anxiety to possess our goods and chattels, can hardly ever be told. Whatever the motive, it was sufficient, as on all sides at once came tales of wrong-doing and violence, of maimed and slaughtered stock, of homicide or murder.

Next day we saw the greater part of the cattle, but those particular ones that Old Tom had missed were not to be found anywhere. We were turning our horses' heads homewards when I noticed the eaglehawks circling around and above a circular clump of ti-tree scrub in a marsh. While we looked a crow flew straight up from the midst of the clump, and we heard the harsh cry of others. The same thought evidently was in all our minds, as we rode straight for the place, and forced our horses between the thick-growing, slender, feathery points. In the centre, amid the tall tussac grass, lay the yellow heifer with the white flank, stone dead. A spear-hole was visible beneath the back ribs. Exactly on the corresponding portion of the other side was another, proving that, strange as it may seem, a spear had been driven right through her body. After Old Tom had concluded his exclamations and imprecations, which were of a most comprehensive nature, we agreed that the campaign had been opened in earnest, and that we knew what we had to expect. "We'll find more to-morrow," said the old man. "Onest they'll begin like this, they'll never lave off till thim villains, Jupiter and Cocknose, is shot, anyway."

These strangely-named individuals had been familiar to our ears ever since our arrival. "Jupiter" was supposed to have a title to the head chieftainship of the tribe which specially affected the Rocks and the neighbourhood of the extinct volcano. Cocknose had been named by the early settlers from the highly unclassical shape of the facial appendage. He was known to be a restless, malevolent savage. Again on the war trail next morning, we tried beating up and down among the paths by which the cattle went to water, at the lower portion of the great marsh. It may be explained that the summer of 1844 was exceptionally dry, and much of the surface water having disappeared, the cattle were compelled to walk in Indian file through the ti-tree, in many places more than ten feet in height, to the deeper portion of the marsh, where water was still visible.

Here Joe Burge hit off a trail, which seemed likely to solve the mystery. "Here they've been back and forward, and pretty thick too," he said, getting off and pointing to the track of native feet, plain enough in the swamp mud.

"Cattle been here," said the old stockman, "and running too. Look at thim deep tracks. The thieves of the world, my heavy curse on them!"

As we followed on the trail grew broader and more plain. A few head of cattle had evidently been surrounded—two or more bullocks, we agreed, and several cows and calves, heading now in this direction, now in that. Presently half of a broken spear was picked up. We followed the track to a thick brake of reeds nearly opposite to a jutting cape of the lava

country. There we halted. A new character was legible in the cipher we had been puzzling out.

"They've thrown him here," said the old man. "Here's where he fell down. There's blood on that tuft of grass; and here's the mark of the side of him in the mud. They've cut him up and carried him away into the Rocks, bit by bit—hide and horns, bones and mate. The divil resave the bit of Magpie ever we'll see again. There's where they wint in."

Sure enough we saw a plainly-marked track, with a fragment of flesh, or a blood-stain, showing the path by which they had carried in a slaughtered animal. Further we could not follow them, as the lava downs were at this spot too rough for horses, and we might also have been taken at a disadvantage. So, on the second evening, we rode home, having found what we went out to seek, certainly, but not elated by the discovery.

It now became a serious question how to bear ourselves in the face of the new state of matters. If the blacks persisted in a guerilla warfare, besides killing many of the best of our cattle, they would scatter and terrify the remainder, so that they would hardly stay on the run; besides which, they held us at a disadvantage. They could watch our movements, and from time to time make *sorties* from the Rocks, and attack our homesteads or cut us off in detail. In the winter season much of the forest land became so deep and boggy that, even on horseback, if surprised and overmatched in numbers, there would be very little chance of getting away. By this time the owners of the neighbouring stations were fully aroused to the necessity of concerted action.

We had reached the point when "something must be done." We could not permit our cattle to be harried, our servants to be killed, and ourselves to be hunted out of the good land we had occupied by a few savages.

Our difficulty was heightened by its being necessary to behave in a quasi-legal manner. Shooting blacks, except in manifest self-defence, had been always held to be murder in the Supreme Courts of the land, and occasionally punished as such.

Now, there were obstacles in the way of taking out warrants and apprehending Jupiter and Cocknose, or any of their marauding braves, in the act. The Queen's writ, as in certain historic portions of the west of Ireland, did not run in those parts. Like all guerillas, moreover, their act of outrage took place sometimes in one part of a large district, sometimes in another, the actors vanishing meanwhile, and reappearing with puzzling rapidity.

We went now well armed. We were well mounted and vigilantly on guard. The Children of the Rocks were occasionally met with, when collisions, not all bloodless, took place.

Their most flagrant robbery was committed on Mr. John Cox's Mount Napier station, whence a flock of maiden ewes was driven, and the shepherd maltreated. These young sheep were worth nearly two pounds per head, besides being impossible to replace. Mr. Cox told me himself that they constituted about a third of his stock in sheep at the time. He therefore few retainers and followed hot on the tr

He had unusual facilities for making successful pursuit. In his house lived a tame aboriginal named Sou'wester, who had a strong personal attachment for Mr. Cox. Like most of his race, he had the true bloodhound faculty when a man-hunt was in question. He led the armed party, following easily the trampling of the flock in the long grass until they reached the edge of the Rocks.

Into this rugged region the flock had been driven. Before long Sou'wester's piercing eye discovered signs of their having been forced along the rocky paths at the point of the spear.

It was evident to him that they were making for the lake, which was in the centre of the lava country.

By and by he pointed out that, by the look of the tracks, they were gaining upon the robbers. And shortly too sure an indication of the reckless greed and cruelty of the savage was furnished.

Passing round an angular ridge of boulders, suddenly they came upon about a hundred young sheep, which had been left behind. "But why are they all lying down?" said one of the party.

The tracker paused, and, lifting a hind-leg of one of the helpless brutes, showed without speech that the limb was useless.

The robbers had dislocated the hind-legs as a simple preventive of locomotion; to insure their being in the same place when it should please their captors to return and eat them.

"I never felt so wolfish in my life," said Mr. Cox to me, afterwards, "as when I saw the poor things turn up their eyes reproachfully as they lay, as if imploring our assistance."

A few more miles brought them up with the main body. They opened fire upon the tolerably large body of blacks in possession, directly they came within range.

"It was the first time I had ever levelled a gun at my fellow-man," John Cox remarked. "I did so without regret or hesitation in this instance. I never remember having the feeling that I could not miss so strong in me—except in snipe-shooting. I distinctly remember knocking over *three* blacks, two men and a boy, with one discharge of my double barrel."

Sou'wester had a good innings that day, which he thoroughly enjoyed. He fired right and left, raging like a demoniac. One huge black, wounded to death, hastened his own end by dragging out his entrails, meanwhile praising up the weapons of the white man as opposed to those of the black. Sou'wester cut short his death-song by blowing out his brains with the horse-pistol of the period.

A few of the front-rankers were shot on this occasion; but most of the others saved themselves by precipitately taking to the lake.

After this nothing happened for a while, until one day a good-sized party was discovered killing a bullock of Messrs. Jamieson, near Ettrick. The brothers Jamieson and Major Learmonth—then unknown to martial fame—went out to dispute title. The scene was in a reed-brake—the opposing force numerous. Spears began to drop searchingly amid and around the little party. It looked like another Isandula, and the swart foe crept [illegible] usly close, and yet more close, from tree to tr

Then a spear struck William Jamieson in the forehead—a rough straw hat alone saving his brain. The blood rushed down, and, dripping on his gun, damped the priming.

Things looked bad. A little faltering had lost the fight.

But the Laird of Ettrick shot the savage dead who threw the spear, and under cover of this surprise he and Robert Jamieson carried their wounded comrade safely out of the field.

Among other experiments for the benefit of the tribe, I had adopted a small black boy. He was formally handed over to me by his grand-uncle, who informed me that his name was Tommy, and adjured me to "kick him plenty." With this thoughtful admonition from his only surviving male relative I did not trouble myself to comply, though it occurred to me subsequently that it was founded upon a correct analysis of boy nature generally, and of Master Tommy's in particular. So he was a good deal spoiled, and, though occasionally useful with the cattle, did pretty much as he liked, and vexed the soul of good Mrs. Burge continually.

One night, when we had been on the run all day and had found the cattle much disorganised, we noticed an unusual number and brilliancy of fires at the black camp in the Rocks. We could generally see their fires in the distance at night, and could judge of the direction of the camp, though, owing to the broken nature of the ground, we did not seek to follow them up, unless when making a *reconnaissance en force.*

On this particular night, however, something

more than usual appeared to be going on. The dogs, too, were uneasy, and I could see that Old Tom appeared to be perturbed and anxious.

"I wouldn't be putting it past them black divils to be makin' a rush some night and thryin' to burn the hut on us," he said gloomily. "If we lave them there, atin' and roastin' away at shins of beef and the hoighth of good livin', as they have now, they'll think we're afraid, and there'll be no houldin' them. Ye might get the gintlemen from Dunmore, and Peter Kearney, and Joe Betts, and Mr. Craufurd, from Eumeralla, and give them a fright out of that before they rise on us in rale arnest."

"No, Tom," I said; "I should not think that just or right. I believe that they have been killing our cattle, but I must catch them in the act, and know for certain what blacks they are, before I take the law into my own hands. As to driving them away from the Rocks, it is their own country, and I will not attack them there till they have done something in my presence to deserve it."

"Take your own way," said the old man, sullenly. He lit his pipe, and said no more.

That night, about midnight, the dogs began to bark in a violent and furious manner, running out into the darkness and returning with all the appearance of having seen something hostile and unusual. We turned out promptly, and, gun in hand, went out some distance into the darkness. The night was of a pitchy Egyptian darkness, in which naught was visible a hand's breadth before one. Once we heard a low murmur as of cautious voices, but it ceased. Suddenly the black boy, had crept a

few yards farther, came tearing back past us, and raced into the hut, where, apparently in an agony of fear, he threw himself down among the ashes of the fireplace, ejaculating, "Wild blackfellow, wild blackfellow!" to the great discomposure of Mrs. Burge.

We fired off a gun to let them know that we were prepared, and separating so that we surrounded the hut on three sides of a front, and could retreat upon it if hard pressed, awaited the attack.

It was rather an exciting moment. The dark midnight, the intense stillness, broken only by the baying of the dogs and the "mysterious sounds of the desert"; the chance of a rush of the wild warriors, who, if unchecked at the onset, would obliterate our small outpost—all these ideas passed through my mind in quick succession as we stood to our guns, and shouted to them to come on.

"But none answered." They probably came near, under cover of the darkness, and, true to their general tactics, declined to make an attack when the garrison was prepared. Had they caught us napping, the result might have been different. This view of the subject was confirmed by something which happened a little while afterwards, and gave us a most apposite text on which to enlarge in our memorials to the Government. I happened to be away with Old Tom on a journey which took us more than a week. When I returned, "wonderful ashes had fallen on our heads," as Hadji Baba phrases it. Our homestead had been surprised and taken by the enemy. They had held possession of the hut for an hour or more, and cleared it of all that they regarded as valuable. Blood had not

been spilled, but "it was God's mercy," Mrs. Burge said, "that she, and Joe, and the precious baby had not all been killed and murdered, and eaten, and all the cattle driven into the Rocks." I began to think that I would never go away again—certainly not for a few years—if adventures of this sort were possible in my absence. After a little blowing off of steam, on Old Tom's part, I gathered from the calmer narrative of Joe Burge the substance of the affair.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NATIVE POLICE

ON the third day after our departure Joe and his wife were in the milking-yard finishing the morning's work, when suddenly Mrs. Burge, looking towards the road, exclaimed, "Good God! the hut's full of blacks!" Realising that her infant lay in his cradle in the front room, she rushed down, in spite of Joe's command to stay where she was while he confronted the enemy.

"Sure, isn't the child there?" she said. "And whether or not, mayn't you and I be as well killed together?"

Joe, having no sufficiently effective answer at hand, was fain to follow his more impetuous helpmate with what speed he might. When they arrived on the scene, they found about twenty or thirty blacks briskly engaged in pillaging the hut. They were passing and repassing from out the doorway, handing to one another provisions and everything which attracted their cupidity.

Mrs. Burge, in her own words, first "med into the big room, and the first thing I seen was this

precious baby on the floor, and him with the cradle turned upside down over him. It's a mercy he wasn't smothered! I jostled the blackfellows, but none of them took any notice of me. When I got outside, who should I see but that little villain Tommy coming out of the dairy with something in his hand. I put down the child and riz the tin milk-dish off the meat-block and hit him over the top of the head with it. Down he drops like a cock. I caught hold of him by the hair, and tried to hold him down, but he was too slippery for me, and got up again. I thought worse of the ungrateful little villain than all the rest. Many's the good drink of milk he had in that same dairy, and now he comes an' lades on the blacks to rob the hut, and perhaps kill poor Joe, that never did him anything but good, and me and the baby."

Said Joe Burge—"I went into the hut quiet-like, and seeing the old woman's monkey was up, after she got outside, gave her a strong push as if I was angry, and sent her back to the milking-yard. She wouldn't go at first, and I made believe to hit her and be very angry with her. This seemed to please the blacks, and they grinned and spoke to one another about it, I could see. I saw them carry out all the tea, sugar, and flour they could find. As far as I could make out, they were not set upon killing me or her. They seemed rather in a good humour, but I knew enough of blacks to see that the turn of a straw might make them change their tune. One fellow had my double gun, which was loaded; he did not know much about the ways of a gun, which was lucky for us. He held up the gun towards me,

and pulled the trigger. The hammers were up, but there were no caps on. I had taken them off the night before. When the gun wouldn't go off, he says, 'no good, no good,' and laughed and handed it to another fellow, who held it in one hand like a fire-stick. I saw they were out for a day's stealing only. I thought it was better not to cross them. They were enough to eat us if it came to that. So I helped them to all they wanted, and sent them away in good humour with themselves and me. By and by down comes the wife from the milking-yard, and she rises an awful pillaloo when she sees what they had took. About a hundredweight of sugar, a quarter-chest of tea, a half-bag of flour, clothes, and, worse than all, two or three silver spoons, with the wife's initials on, which she looked on as something very precious. Master Tommy, who had put up the job to my thinking, cleared out with them. I saw them making a straight board for the rocks, toward the lake. I guessed they would camp there that night. As soon as they were well out of sight I catches the old mare and ripped over pretty quick to Dunmore. I saw Mr. Macknight, and told him, and he promised to make up a party next morning and follow them up, and see whether something might not be recovered.

"Next morning, soon after sunrise, he, and Mr. Irvine, and Mr. Cunningham, and their stockman, all came riding up to the place. They left their horses in our paddock, and we went off on foot through the swamp, and over to the nearest point of the rocks.

"We had all guns but me. Mr. Macknight and

Mr. Irvine had rifles, Mr. Cunningham and the Dunmore stockman double-barrels. It was bad walking through the rocks, but after a mile or two I hit off their tracks by finding where they had dropped one or two little things they had stolen. The grass was so long and thick that they trod it down like as they were going through a wheat-field, so we could see how they had gone by that.

"Well, after four or five miles terrible hard walking, we came in sight of the lake, and just on a little knob on the left-hand side, with a bit of flat under it, was the camp. I crept up, and could see them all sitting round their fires, and yarning away like old women, laughing away now and then. By George, thinks I, you'll be laughing on the wrong side of your mugs directly.

"Well, I crept back and told the party, and we all began to sneak on them quietly, so as to be close on them before they had any notion of our being about, when Mr. Cunningham, who was a regular bull-dog for pluck, but awful careless and wild-like, trips over a big stone, tumbling down among the rocks, drops his gun, and then swears so as you could hear him a mile off.

"All the dogs in the camp—they're the devil and all to smell out white men—starts a barkin'. The blacks jumps up, and, catching sight of the party, bolts away to the lake like a flock of wild duck. We gave 'em a volley, but it was a long shot, and our folks was rather much in a hurry. I didn't see no one tumble down. Anyway, between divin' in the lake, getting behind the big basalt boulders on the shore of the lake, and getting right away, when

we got up the camp was bare of everything but an old blind lubra that sat there with a small child beside her, blinkin' with her old eyes, and grinnin' for all the world like one of the Injun idols I used to see in the squire's hall at home. Just as we got up, one fellow bolted out from behind a rock, and went off like a half-grown forester buck. Mr. Cunningham bangs away at him, and misses him; then flings down his gun, and chivies after him like a schoolboy. He had as much chance of catching him as a collie dog has of running down an emu.

"I couldn't hardly help bustin' with laughin'; there was Mr. Cunningham, who was tremendous strong, but rather short on the leg, pounding away as if he thought he'd catch him every minute, and the blackfellow, a light active chap, spinning over the stones like a rock-wallaby—his feet didn't hardly seem to touch the ground. Then Mr. Macknight was afraid Mr. Cunningham might run into an ambush or something of that kind. 'Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Cunningham, come back! I order you to come back!' Howsoever, Mr. Cunningham didn't or wouldn't hear him; but, after awhile, the blackfellow runs clean away from him, and he come back pretty red in the face, and his boots cut all to pieces. We rummaged the camp, and found most of the things that were worth taking back. The flour, and tea, and sugar they had managed to get rid of. Most likely sat up all night and ate 'em right off. Blacks feed like that, I know.

"But we got the gun and a lot of other things that were of value to us, as well as my wife's silver spoons, which she never stopped talkin' about, so I

was very glad to fall across 'em. After stopping half an hour we made up all the things that could be carried, and marched away for home. It was a long way, and we were pretty well done when we got there. However, my old woman gave us a first-rate tea, and I caught the horses, and the gentlemen rode home. There's no great harm done, sir, that I know of, but it might have been a *plaguy sight worse;* don't you think so, sir?"

I could not but assent to the proposition. The caprice of the savage had apparently turned their thoughts from blood revenge, though they "looted" the establishment pretty thoroughly. Another time worse might easily happen. We determined to keep good watch, and not to trust too much to the chapter of accidents.

After half a ream of foolscap had been covered with representations to the Governor, in which I proudly hoped to convey an idea that our condition was much like that of American border settlers when Tecumseh and Massasoit were on the war-path, a real live troop of horse was despatched to our assistance. First came two of the white mounted police from Colac; then a much more formidable contingent, for one morning there rode up eight troopers of the native police, well armed and mounted, carbine in sling, sword in sheath, dangling proper in regular cavalry style. The irregular cavalry force known as the Native Police was then in good credit and acceptation in our colony. They had approved themselves to be highly effective against their sable kinsmen. The idea originated in Victoria, if I mistake not, and was afterwards developed in New

South Wales, still later in Queensland. Mr. H. E. Pulteney Dana and his brother William were the chief organisers and first officers in command. They were principally recruited from beyond the Murray, and occasionally from Gippsland. They were rarely or never used in the vicinity of their own tribes. Picked for physique and intelligence, well disciplined, and encouraged to exercise themselves in athletic sports when in barracks, they were by no means to be despised as adversaries, as was occasionally discovered by white as well as black wrongdoers.

Mounted on serviceable, well-conditioned horses, all in uniform, with their carbines slung, and steel scabbards jingling as they rode, they presented an appearance which would have done no discredit to Hodson or Jacob's Horse. Buckup, as non-commissioned officer, rode slightly in front, the others following in line. As I came out of the hut door the corporal saluted. "We been sent up by Mr. Dana, sir, to stop at this station a bit. Believe the blacks been very bad about here."

The blacks! This struck me as altogether lovely and delicious. How calm and lofty was his expression! I answered with decorum that they had, indeed, been very bad lately—speared the cattle, robbed the hut, etc.; that yesterday we had seen the tracks of a large mob of cattle, which had been hunted in the boggy ground at the back of the run for miles.

"They only want a good scouring, sir," quoth Buckup, carelessly, as he gave the order to dismount.

As they stood before me I had a good opportunity

of observing their general appearance. Buckup was a fine-looking fellow, six feet high, broad shouldered and well proportioned, with a bold, open cast of countenance, set off with well-trimmed whiskers and moustache. He was a crack hand with the gloves, I heard afterwards, and so good a wrestler that he might have come off in a contest with Sergeant Francis Stewart, sometimes called Bothwell, nearly as satisfactorily as did Balfour of Burley. Tallboy, so called from his unusual height, probably, was a couple of inches taller, but slender and wiry looking; while Yapton was a middle-sized, active warrior, with a smooth face, a high nose, heavy, straight hair, and a grim jaw. I thought at the time he must be very like an American Indian. The others I do not particularly recall, but all had a smart, serviceable look, as they commenced to unsaddle their horses and pile their arms and accoutrements, preparatory to making camp in a spot which I had pointed out to them.

They spent the rest of the day in this necessary preliminary, and by nightfall had a couple of mia-mias solidly built with their backs to the sea wind, and neatly thatched with tussac grass from the marsh.

During the afternoon Buckup held consultation with me, Joe Burge, and Old Tom, at the conclusion of which he professed himself to be in possession of the requisite information, and decided as to future operations.

Next morning, early, the white troopers and the blacks started off for a long day in the Rocks, on foot. It was almost impossible to take horses through

that rugged country, and the police horses were too good to be needlessly exposed to lameness, and probably disablement. Long afterwards a trusty retainer of mine was betrayed into a hardish ride therein after an unusually tempting mob of fat cattle and unbranded calves, which had escaped muster for more than a year. The shoes of the gallant mare which he rode came off before the day was done. He was compelled to leave her with bleeding feet a mile from the edge of the smooth country, bringing out the cattle, however, with the aid of his dogs. Next day we went back to lead her out, but poor Chileña was as dead as Britomarte.

So, lightly arrayed, the black troopers stole through the reeds of the marsh, in the dim light of a rainy dawn, and essayed to track the rock-wolves to their lair. Camps they found, many a one, having good store of beef bones at all of them, but the *indigènes* were gone, though signs of recent occupation were plentiful. An outlying scout had "cut the track" of the trooper's horses, and "jaloused," as Mr. Gorrie would have said, only too accurately what was likely to follow. Anyhow, the contingent returned tired and rather sulky after sundown, with their boots considerably the worse for wear. I did not myself accompany the party, nor did I propose to do so at any other time. I took it for granted that blood might be shed, and I did not wish to be an eye-witness or participator. The matter at issue was now grave and imminent. Whether should we crush the unprovoked *émeute*, or remove the remnant of our stock, abandon our homesteads, and yield up the good land of which we had taken possession?

It would hardly have been English to do the latter. So we had nothing for it but to make the best fight we could.

A fresh reconnaissance was made daily from my homestead, sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another. But though rumours were heard of their appearance in different and distant parts of the district, no actual sight of the foe could be accomplished. Buckup and his men-at-arms, after the first day, were very patient and cheerful about the matter. They played quoits, of which I had a set—wrestled and boxed during their leisure hours, shot kangaroo and wild duck, and generally comported themselves as if this sort of thing was all in the day's work. Meantime, the heavy winter rains had begun to fall and the marshes to fill; the forest became so saturated that horses could hardly be ridden over it in places. I had occasion to go to Belfast for a couple of days on business. When I returned I found that a regular engagement had taken place the day before, the result of which would probably be decisive.

Neither of my men had been out, as it happened, but they had gleaned their information from the white troopers, and very sparingly from Buckup. Beyond saying that they had come up with the main body of the tribe and given them a scouring, he was disposed to say but little.

On this particular day an expedition had been made to a "heathy," desolate tract of country which lay at "the back" of the run. Here were isolated marshes covered with rushes, and for the most part surrounded with belts of tall ti-tree scrub. Between

these were sand-hills with a thick, sheltering growth of casuarina and banksia, while here and there grew copses of mimosa and blackwood, the Australian hickory. Here, it seems, the police were plodding along, apparently on their usual persistent but unavailing search, when suddenly one of the men pulled up, dismounted, and, picking up something, gave a low, sibilant whistle. In an instant the whole troop gathered around him, while he held up a small piece of bark which had quite recently been ignited. Not a word was said as Yapton took the lead, at a sign from Buckup, and the rest of the black troopers followed in loose order, like questing hounds, examining with eager eyes every foot of the way. Shortly afterwards a tree was discovered where, with a few fresh cuts of a tomahawk, a grub had been taken out of the hollow wood. The trail had been struck.

Patiently for several hours the man-hunters followed up the tracks, while fresh signs from time to time showed that a large body of blacks had quite recently passed that way. Suddenly, at a yell from Yapton, every man raised his head, and then rode at full speed towards a frantic company of savages as, startled and surprised, they made for a patch of scrub.

The horses fell and floundered from time to time in the deep, boggy soil, but their desperate riders managed to lift and hustle them up as the last black disappeared in the ti-tree. Unluckily for them, the scrub was not a large one, and the ground on either side comparatively clear.

Buckup sent a man to each corner, and himself with two troopers charged into the centre. Spears

began to fly, and boomerangs; but the wild men had little chance with their better-armed countrymen. Out bolts a flying fugitive, and makes for the nearest reed-bed. Tallboy is nearest to him, and his horse moves as he raises his carbine, and disturbs the aim. Striking him savagely over the head with the butt end, he raises his piece, fires, and Jupiter drops on his face. Quick shots follow, a general stampede takes place, but few escape, and when the troop turn their horses' heads homeward, all the known leaders of the tribe are down. They were caught red-handed, too, a portion of a heifer and her calf freshly slaughtered being found on the spot where they were first sighted.

Such was the substance of the tale as told to me. It may have been more or less incorrect as to detail, but Jupiter and his associate with the unclassical profile were never seen alive again; and as no head of stock was ever known to be speared or stolen after that day, it may be presumed that the chastisement was effectual. Years afterwards a man showed me the cicatrix of a bullet-wound in the region of the chest, and asserted that "Police-blackfellow 'plenty kill him'" on that occasion. He further added that he promptly, upon recovery, hired himself as a shepherd to "old man Gorrie," as he disrespectfully termed that patriarch, being convinced that lawless proceedings were likely to bring him to a bad end.

This would seem to have been the general opinion of the tribe. After due time they came in and made submission, working peaceably and usefully for the squatters, who were only too glad to

assist their efforts in the right path. Many years afterwards the remnant of the tribe was gathered together and "civilised" at the missionary station of Lake Condah, a fine sheet of water at the western extremity of the lava country, and less than twenty miles from the scene of the proceedings described. There the black and half-caste descendants of the once powerful Mount Eeles tribe dwell harmlessly and happily, if not usefully to the State. A resident of the district informed me some time since that a black henchman of mine lived at the Mission, and was last seen driving some of his kinsfolk *in a buggy*. Tommy had taken advantage of his opportunities, moreover, for he sent a message of goodwill and remembrance to me, further intimating that if I would write to him *he would answer my letter!* Such is the progress of civilisation; but, with all good wishes for the success of the experiment, I do not anticipate permanently valuable results.

When Tommy and I swam the Leigh together, one snowy day, bound for Ballarat with fat cattle, I suspect he was employed in a manner more befitting to his nature, and more improving to his general *morale*.

CHAPTER IX

KILFERA

OUR border ruffians being settled with for good and all, we pioneers were enabled to devote ourselves to our legitimate business—the breeding and fattening of cattle. For this industry the Port Fairy district was eminently fitted, and at that time—how different from the present!—sheep and wool were rather at a discount. Of course, some men had sufficient foresight and shrewdness to back the golden fleece, but their experiences were not encouraging.

The heavy herbage and rich soil of the West tended lamentably to foot-rot. The flocks seemed to be in a state of chronic lameness. The malady either reduced wool increase and condition to a point considerably below zero, or necessitated the employment of such a number of hands in applying bluestone and butyr of antimony (the remedies of the period), that the shearing subsidy was considerably encroached on.

Then there was "Scab"—word of dread and hatefulness, herald of ruin and loss, of endless torment to all concerned, of medicated dippings, dressings,

deaths and destructions innumerable; the dreadful multiplication of station hands, who assisted with cheerful but perfunctory effort, patently disbelieving in "any species of cure," and looking on the whole affair—disease, dressing, and dipping—as a manifest dispensation of Providence for the sustentation of the "poor man."

When all had been done that could be done by the proprietor in his desperate need, a single sheep straying among the straggling flocks, or reintroduced by a careless or malignant station hand (and the latter crime is alleged to have been more than once committed), was sufficient to undo a year's labour. Then the distracting, expensive task had to be commenced *de novo.*

In those days, too, when fencing was not; when the shepherds comprised, perhaps, the very worst class of labour in the colonies, it may be guessed how hard and anxious a life was that of the western Victorian sheepowner.

His neighbour, too, was but too often his natural enemy. A careless flockholder might supply a nucleus of contagion from which a whole district would suffer. This state of matters continued until the gold discoveries, when the shepherds having mostly withdrawn themselves, and a compulsory admixture of flocks taking place, scab spread throughout the length and breadth of Victoria. What its cost to the Government and to private persons was before it was finally stamped out would be difficult, very difficult, to find out—so large a sum that it would have paid all concerned ten times, a hundred times over, to have purchased all infected

stock at, say, £5 per head, only to have cut the throats of and cremated the lot.

"Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth" is a scriptural aphorism strictly applicable to acarian development. Many a well-to-do sheepholder was burnt out of house and home by the quick-spreading ovine leprosy which germinated at a friend's carelessly-ordered establishment. So that it came to pass that the "Gallants of Westland" were loath to exchange the free roving lives of cattle-tending caballeros for the restricted, "pokey," worrying round of duties to which the sheepholders seemed doomed. At one of our gatherings, at which—the majority being cattle-men—a toast involving a little indirect self-laudation was duly honoured, a pioneer squatter from a distance remarked gravely, "How little you fellows can realise what a life *we* have been leading in our district the last year or two!" He had just finished "cleaning" his flocks, as had also his neighbours. He certainly looked, as the financial survivor of a drought expressed it once, as though he had "come through the Valley of the Shadow."

When we rubbed along thus jovially, deeming life to be "a great and glorious thing," fat cows were well sold at £2 per head, and bullocks at £3. Certainly you could buy stores (or, as they primevally called them, "lean cattle") at from 10s. to 16s., prices which left a margin. The Messrs. Manifold bought a large number of bullocks from the Shelleys, of Tumut, at the latter price, somewhere about the year 1845. How they fattened at Purrumbeet and Leura may be imagined! They fetched top prices, but were not thought to pay so

well as the early ripening station-breds, on which the 3M brand was thenceforth chiefly placed.

I became possessed of a herd of a thousand head about the same time, which I took "on terms," as the arrangement was thus called—a convenient one for beginners with more country than capital, and *vice versa.* I was to have one-third of the increase, and to be paid ten per cent upon all sales of fat cattle. They were to be "personally conducted" by me from the Devil's River—a place uncanny sounding, but not otherwise objectionable. They were the property of Messrs. Curlewis and Campbell; the first-named gentleman arranged preliminaries with me in town, and in a few days I again started from Melbourne with high hopes and three stock-riders.

Our route lay over country that has since become historical. One half of the herd was located at Strathbogie, and through those forest-clothed solitudes and adown the steep shoulder of the leading range had we to drive our unwilling cattle. It was on that occasion that I made acquaintance with my good, warm-hearted friend Charles Ryan—then a gay young bachelor living at Kilfera, on the Broken River. We met at an extremely small, not to say dismal hut at Strathbogie, already inhabited by Messrs. Joe Simmons, Salter, and Hall, who, together with my men and myself, were constrained to abide therein till the cattle, weak and low after their drive from the head of the Abercrombie in New South Wales, were mustered.

"Come along over with me and let them muster the cattle themselves, *you* have only to take delivery,"

was his highly natural salutation (*i.e.* natural to Charles Ryan), and I came along accordingly.

Kilfera station was a comfortable bachelor homestead, and it struck me, as I saw it for the first time, that it had a distinctly "Galway" look about it. The hospitality was free and unstinted. I was not the only guest. As we rode up we came upon a match at quoits, the players at which wore the air of non-combatants. There was a fine upstanding son of Peter Fin, "Modderidderoo" by name, in the stables; on the next day I was shown the very panel where Mr. Jack Hunter had jumped "The Badger" over a three-railed fence, without bridle or saddle.

"We saw him coming up the paddock," said my host (he had gone down to catch his horse and taken no bridle with him), "at a swinging hand-gallop, and all turned out of the verandah to look. He had only a switch in his hand; when he came to the creek he took it at a fly, and then faced the three-railed fence at the stable. He went over here—over this very rail—and came down sitting as square as if he was riding in the park, holding his hat, too, in both hands." "How did he stop the horse?" "He jumped off on the straw heap here, and fell on his legs like a cat." I had a slight previous acquaintance with the gentleman referred to, whose whilom sobriquet of "Jack the Devil" was fully deserved, as far as feats of horsemanship were concerned. He rode equally well in a side-saddle, and once at least defied the minions of the law decorously attired in a lady's riding habit, with hat, gloves, and whip to match.

To complete the "wild sports of the West" flavour with which my fancy had invested Kilfera, entered to us that night, travelling with horses, one Mr. Crowe, evidently of kin to the "three Mr. Trenches of Tallybash," popularly known as "mad Crowe." Slightly eccentric to an unprejudiced observer he appeared to be. He was a tall, fair-haired, athletic fellow, and he had not been half an hour in the house before, after gifting all his horses with impossible qualities and improbable pedigrees, he offered to row, wrestle, ride, drink, or fight any one of the company for a liberal wager. He finished off the evening's entertainment by volunteering and going outside to execute an imitation of an Irish "keen" at a wake, a performance which was likely to have cost him dear, as it offended the sensibilities of several of the station hands, who were strongly minded to arise and "hammer" him (Crowe) for belittling their native land. "How happily the days of Thalaba went by" at Kilfera; indeed, I regarded with complacency the somewhat protracted muster of the Strathbogie herd. However, one fine day they were mustered and counted out to me, mixed with the Devil's River contingent; blacks and brindles, yellows and strawberries, snaileys and poleys, old and young, they were "a mixed herd" in every sense. But cattle were cattle in those days. So I bade farewell to my kind friend and pleasant acquaintances, and took the road for Port Fairy—four hundred miles or so. But an odd hundred leagues of a journey was nothing then. How the country must have altered since those days. No Beechworth diggings—Castlemaine, Sandhurst, and

Ballarat all in the "forest primeval" stage, innocent of cradle and pick, windlass and bucket. Quartz indeed! The first time it was mentioned in my hearing was by James Irvine, who was chaffing Captain Bunbury about the quality of his run on the Grampians, and averring that the only chance of his cattle getting fat was in the event of their being able to live on quartz. Quartz, quotha! I hardly knew what it meant, save that it was a kind of rock. Heavens! Could I have foreseen how closely it was to be interwoven with my destiny—with all our destinies, for the matter of that!

It was the autumn season, and the way was pleasant enough, after we left the sunless glens and darksome mountain-sides of Strathbogie. We passed Seven Creeks homestead, then, or somewhat later, the property of Mr. William Forlonge. He, like the rest of us, did not know when he was well off, and must move northward evermore, towards the great Saltbush Desert, that false Eldorado, which, like the loadstone mountain in the Arabian tale, has attracted and ruined so many a life, swallowed how many a fortune! However, *nil desperandum* is his motto; and if fortune favours the brave, the plucky veteran of the pastoral army should come out well in the end.

By easy stages we fared on till we came to Kilmore. That flourishing city, as I suppose it calls itself now, was then chiefly noted for its mud, the depth and blackness of which were truly remarkable. A few potato-growing farms and the usual complement of public-houses made up the town. There I lost two horses, a serious and melancholy occurrence

which was likely to interfere with our march. I left the cattle to come on, and resolved to ride to Melbourne to find them or get others. I knew they were likely to "make" in that direction, about the Upper Plenty.

At Kinlochewe I encountered the late Mr. Dalmahoy Campbell. He condoled with me. How pleasant is a sympathetic manner from an older man to a youngster! I have never forgotten those who, in my youth, were kindly and tolerant. He gave me the advice of an experienced overlander, and promised to write to a friend in the neighbourhood to look out for the runaways.

At the next stage I encountered my old friend Fred Burchett, late of "The Gums," another Port Fairy man, luckily also bound that way with a herd of cows and calves—the latter given in—which he had purchased from Mr. Shelley, at Tumut. His cattle were just ahead, and he proposed that we should join forces at Keilor, and journey together the rest of the way. Nothing could be nicer. I forgot my griefs. "Lost horses," like "lost sheep," produce acute suffering while they last; but the agony abates, as Macaulay said. I spent the evening with him, and next day went on to Melbourne.

Poor dear Fred! The kindest, the best-tempered, the most humorous of men! How many a laugh we had together! It has always been a grief to me that he died before the advent of Bret Harte or Mark Twain! How he would have revelled in their inimitable touches, their daring drolleries, their purest pathos. A well-read man and a fair scholar,

his was a mind nearly related to that of Charles Lamb, of whose wondrous semitones of mirth and melancholy he had the fullest appreciation. He, though living fifty miles away, was one of the "Dunmore mob," and aided generally in the symposia which were there enjoyed. It was a great stroke of luck our being able to join forces, and I looked forward to the rest of the journey as quite a pleasant picnic party.

I did not get my truant horses (they were ultimately recaptured), but I foraged up other remounts and rejoined my cattle, with which I made a cut across country *via* Deep Creek, Woodlands, and Keilor, then the property of Mr. J. B. Watson, and exhibiting no foreshadowing of a railway station. Mr. Burchett was only one stage ahead, I was told. At the Little River I overtook him. This was his observation on that eccentric watercourse. Scanning with an eye of deepest contemplation its cavernous channel and apparently perfect freedom from the indispensable element, he thus delivered himself: "They call this the Little River. Well they may! It's the smallest blooming river *I* ever came across! Why, we had hard work to get water enough in it to boil our kettle with!"

After this amalgamation everything went prosperously. We had plenty of driving power, and the cattle strung along the road daily with comparatively nimble feet. Something of this cheerfulness may be attributed to the fact that we had ceased to camp or watch them. Judging correctly that after so long a trail they would be indisposed to ramble, we left them out [illegible]ht, and slept the sleep

of the just. At daylight they were always well within view, generally lying down, and half-an-hour's work put them all together. Fred was always averse to early exercise, so we compromised matters by his lending me his one-eyed cob, "The Gravedigger," so called from a partial resemblance to the animal incautiously acquired by the Elder in "Sam Slick" at a Lower Canadian horse fair. "They're a simple people, those French; they don't know much about horses; their priests keeps it from 'em." This quotation Fred had always in his mouth, and as "The Gravedigger" was not quite what he appeared to be, a perfectly-shaped and well-mannered cob, there certainly was a resemblance. One of his peculiarities, probably arising from defective vision, was an occasional paroxysm of unreasonable fear, accompanied by backjumping, which had occasionally unseated his master and others. One day, however, Fred rode into camp with a triumphant expression, having just had a stand-up fight with "The Gravedigger." "He tried all he knew, confound him!" he explained, "but he couldn't shift me an inch. I had too much mud on my boots." This novel receipt for horsemanship was comprehensible when we glanced at the amount of solid western mud disposed not only on the boots, but upon his whole person and apparel. I had no compunction, therefore, in taking it out of "The Gravedigger" in those early morning gallops, and he was decidedly less unsocial for the rest of the day in consequence.

The only bad night we had was just before we came to the Leigh River. There we were amid "purchased land," that bane of the old-world pastoralist,

so had to watch all night and keep our horses in hand, which was unprecedented.

When daylight broke my comrade said, with an air of tremendous deliberation, "The men can bring on the cattle well enough now, Rolf; suppose you and I go and breakfast at the Leigh Inn?" I caught at the idea, and we rode on the seven miles as happy as schoolboys at the idea of a real breakfast with chops and steaks, eggs and buttered toast, on a clean tablecloth. After a night's watching, too, our appetites were something marvellous. Fred related to me how on a previous occasion he had originated this "happy thought," and, not to be deficient of every adjunct to luxurious enjoyment, had ordered a bath, and borrowed a clean shirt from the landlord. We contented ourselves with the bath on this turn.

As we sat in the pleasant parlour a couple of hours later, serene and satisfied—I might say satiated—reading the latest *Port Phillip Patriot*, we saw the long string of cattle draw down a deep gorge into the valley, and cross the river in front of the house. Then we ordered out the horses, paid our bill, and, with a sigh of gastronomic retrospect, followed the trail across the plain.

CHAPTER X

OLD PORT FAIRY

MR. BURCHETT was rather famous for combining pleasure with business when travelling on the road with stock. At times his experiments were thought *un peu risqués*. It was related of him and Mr. Alick Kemp (I think) that finding themselves so near Melbourne as the Saltwater River, in sole charge of a mob of fat cattle from "The Gums," they held council, and decided that the cattle would be all right in a bend of the river till the morning, being quiet and travel-worn. The friends then started for Melbourne, where they went to the theatre and otherwise enjoyed themselves. They came back the first thing in the morning, to find the cattle peacefully reposing, and as safe as houses. It might well have been otherwise. There was a dismal tale current in the district of the first mob of fat cattle from Eumeralla — magnificent animals, elephants in size, and rolling fat—stampeding at the sight of a pedestrian, on the road to market, being lost, and, as to the greater part, never recovered.

This time we decided to take "the Frenchman's"

road, past Crécy, a trifle monotonous, perhaps,—it was all plain till you got to Salt Creek,—but possessing advantages for so large a drove. We reached an out-station of the Hopkins Hill property, then owned by a Tasmanian proprietary, and managed by "a fine old 'Scottish' gentleman, all of the olden time." We put the cattle into a small mustering paddock, and retired to rest with great confidence in their comfort and our own. About midnight a chorus of speculative lowing and bellowing acquainted us with the fact that they were all out. An unnoticed slip-rail had betrayed us. We arose, but could do nothing, and returned to our blankets. Our rest, however, had been effectually broken.

"How did you sleep, Fred?" was my query at daylight.

"Well," meditatively, "I've had a quantity of *very inferior sleep*," was his rejoinder.

At Nareeb Nareeb, the station then of Messrs. Scott, Gray, and Marr, we, by permission, camped for the purpose of separating our cattle, either by drafting through the yard, or by "cutting out" on horseback. After a brief trial of the latter method, we decided for the stock-yard, there being a large and well-planned one on the ground. But the mud! —it was the merry month of May, or else June only, and rain had fallen in sufficient quantities to make millionaires *now* of all the squatters from Ballarat to Bourke. We put on our oldest clothes, armed ourselves with sticks, and resolutely faced it. What figures we were at nightfall! We smothered a few head, but the work was done. Our entertainers had a short time since mustered their whole

herd, and sold them in Adelaide. We heard some of their road stories. In crossing the great marshes which lie to the north-west of Mount Gambier, they had to carry their collie dogs on horseback before them for miles.

We had nothing quite so bad as this, but after we parted next day, Fred for "The Gums," and in cheering proximity to the Mount Rouse stony rises, the best fattening, and withal best sheltered, winter country in the west, I envied him his luck. I had farther to go, and when I arrived my homestead was situated upon an island, with leagues of water around it in every direction.

To "tail" or herd cattle daily in such weather was impossible, so both herds were turned out, and by dint of reasonable "going round" and general supervision, they took kindly to their new quarters.

Fred, I remember, told me that his cattle went bodily into the "Mount Rouse stones," which by no means belonged to his run, and there abode all the winter. He did not trouble his head much about them till the spring, when they came in, of course, as mustering commenced. There were no fences then, and no man vexed himself about such a trifle as a few hundred head of a neighbour's cattle being on his run.

On our way we returned to and camped opposite Hopkins Hill station homestead. A neat cottage in those days, slightly different from the present mansion. Thence I think to Mr. Joseph Ware's of Minjah, a cattle station which had not been very long bought from Messrs. Plummer and Dent, who had purchased from the Messrs. Bolden

Brothers. Then past Smylie and Austin's to Kangatong, where dwelt Mr. James Dawson.

We remained at Kangatong for a day, so as to give Joe Burge time to come and meet us, which he did, considerably lightening my labours and anxieties thereby. Thence to Dunmore, which was "as good as home." The next day saw the whole lot safe in a big brush-yard, which Joe Burge had thoughtfully prepared for their reception, thinking it would do to plant with potatoes in the spring. And a capital crop there was!

I always think that the years intervening between 1846 and the diggings—that is, the discovery of gold at the Turon, in New South Wales, in 1850, and at Ballarat in 1851—were the happiest of the pastoral period. There was a good and improving market for all kinds of stock. Labour, though not over-plentiful, was sufficient for the work necessary to be done. The pastures were to a great extent under-stocked, so that there were reserves of grass which enabled the squatter to contend successfully with the occasional dry seasons. There was inducement to moderate enterprise, without allurement to speculation. The settlement of the country was progressing steadily. Agricultural and pastoral occupation moved onward in lines parallel to one another. There was no jostling or antagonism. Each of the divisions of rural labour had its facilities for legitimate development. There were none of the disturbing forces which have assumed such dangerous proportions in these latter days. No studied schemes of resistance or circumvention were thought of by the squatter. [illegible] spiteful agrarian

invasion, no blackmailing, no sham improvements were possible on the part of the farmer.

From time to time portions of land specially suited for agricultural settlement were surveyed and subdivided by the Government. On these, as a matter of course, when sold by auction at some advance upon upset price, according to quality, was a purely agricultural population settled. It had not then occurred to the squatter, hard set to find money for his necessary expenditure upon labour and buildings, stock and implements, to pay down £1 per acre or more for ordinary grazing ground. The farmer, as a rule, sold him flour and forage, supplied some of the needful labour, and hardly more came into competition with his pastoral neighbour than if he had lived in Essex or Kent.

I can answer in my own person for the friendly feeling which then existed between the two great primitive divisions of land-occupation. The Port Fairy farmers were located upon two large blocks, the Farnham and Belfast surveys, about ten miles from the nearest and not more than fifty from the more distant squattages. "The Grange," afterwards known by its present name of "Hamilton," was then part of a station, and was not surveyed and subdivided till some years after.

The majority of the squatters found it cheaper to buy flour and potatoes from the farmers than to grow them. Most of us grew our own hay and oats; but in after years our requirements were largely supplemented from Port Fairy, even in these easily produced crops. In return the farmers purchased milch cows, as well as steers for breaking

to plough and team; and if these, with the increase of the female cattle, strayed on to the runs, they were always recoverable at muster time, and no threat of impounding was ever made. The agricultural area was enlarged when needed. To this no squatter objected, nor, to my knowledge, was such land purchased by other than *bona-fide* farmers. I cannot call to mind any feud or litigation between squatter and farmer having its inception in the land question.

Both classes met alike at race meetings and agricultural Shows; and, as far as could be noticed, there was none of the smouldering feeling of jealousy regarding the prevalence of *latifundia*, or other *casus belli*, which has of late years blazed up and raged so furiously.

Wages were not high in those days, and yet the men were contented. They certainly saved more money than they do now. They managed to acquire stock, and after taking up a bit of unoccupied country, became squatters, and wealthy ones too. Joe Burge and his wife received £30 a year. Old Tom had 10s. a week; lodging and rations, in which matters, at that time, we shared much alike, were included.

I recall, moreover, instances of genuine attachment as exhibited by old family servants to the children of their masters, though it is generally asserted that this particular kind of faithful retainership is confined to those who are happy enough to be born in Europe.

Mr. John Cox, of Werrongourt, supplied one instance, at least, which illustrates the feeling so honourable to both master and servant. A shepherd

named Buckley had saved sufficient money in his service wherewith to purchase a small flock of sheep. He found a run for them on a corner of the Mount Rouse country, where they increased to the respectable number of 14,000. He told me and others that, as Mr. Cox had in the first instance given him facilities for investing his savings profitably, and in every way taken an interest in his welfare, he was resolved to leave his whole property to "Master Johnny," the second son, then a fine ingenuous lad of twelve or thirteen. Buckley was a bachelor, I may state, and had presumably no other claims upon his fortune.

But, about a year before his death, he received intelligence that a sister, of whom he had not heard since his arrival in Tasmania, had emigrated to America, and was still living. He consulted a mutual friend, and was told that Mr. Cox was the last man who would wish, or indeed allow him to neglect his own kin. "I must leave Master Johnny something," he said; and when the old man passed away, and his property was chiefly devised to his sister, a sum of £1000 was duly bequeathed to Mr. John Cox, jun.

Mr. Cox was unfortunately in failing health at that time. The station, Werrongourt, was sold to Mr. Mooney, the great cattle-dealer, for the magnificent (?) price of £5 per head! It was the first rise in cattle after the gold of 1851, and anything over £3 per head was thought a high figure. Mr. Cox, however, was anxious to visit the old country, chiefly on account of his health. The change was unavailing. He died on the voyage, to the great grief of the

district, where all revered him as a high-minded, honourable country gentleman. He was, indeed, a worthy son of the good south land, a staunch friend, a true patriot, and as a magistrate famed for the unswerving justice which equally regarded rich and poor. Among his humbler countrymen, "Mr. Cox said it" was sufficient to close any argument, whatever might be the interest involved.

"Master Johnny," some years after, elected to enter the German army. He and a younger brother fought in the Franco-Prussian war; they were both wounded at Sedan, where their mother, an Australian by birth (*née* Miss Frances Cox, of Hobartville), attended them till their recovery, continuing her unselfish labours by acting as hospital nurse until the end of the war.

The brothers were, no doubt, promoted. They were in the cavalry, as became Australians, and most probably now, as Baron and Count von Coxe, are adding fresh branches to a wide-spreading and generally flourishing family tree.

When "Master Johnny," one fresh spring morning, rode down to Squattlesea Mere from Werrongourt, bringing two couples of draft foxhounds from his father's pack, to be sent to an intending M.F.H. in another colony, we little dreamed of the ranks in which he was to ride, the sport in which he was to share, ere the second decade should have passed over our heads.

CHAPTER XI

PORTLAND BAY

SQUATTLESEA MERE was about ten miles from the coast, and equidistant from the towns of Port Fairy and Portland, the latter lying about thirty miles westward. My first visit to it was on the occasion of a sale of some fat cattle to Mr. Henty for the use of the whalers—who were then still extant. Of course there were plenty of bullocks at Muntham, but it was hardly worth while to send so far for so small a lot. I was ready to deliver, and not indisposed for the trip and adventure myself.

So, having been helped off the run by Joe Burge, I started with my beeves, and made the journey safely to the slaughter-yards, which were then a few miles on the hither side of the town, near the beach. The road lay through the marshes for five or six miles, then through the stringy-bark forest, whence I emerged on an open sandy tract known as "the heath." Such land is not uncommon in the vicinity of Portland and west of Port Fairy; indeed, the greater part of the country between Portland and the wondrous downs of the Wannon

consists of this undesirable formation alternately with stringy-bark forest.

The soil upon the heath is pure sand of a white or greyish colour. Small lagoons, thickly covered with dark-brown reeds, are spread over the surface; it is mostly firm riding ground, though very indifferent pasture. Several species of epacris grow there, the pink and white blossoms of which were gay and even brilliant in spring. Open as a plain, and, apart from a question of grass, an effective contrast to the endless eucalyptus. A few miles of heath—the forest again—and we come to Darlot's Creek, narrow, but running deep and strong, like a New Zealand river.

This singular stream must in some way receive the water of the great Eumeralla marshes, which, as they have no visible outlet, probably filter through the lava country, from which, near Lake Condah, Darlot's Creek issues without previous notice.

Summer and winter this cheery little stream, from twenty to fifty feet wide, and hardly ever less than from six to ten feet deep, rushes whirling and eddying to the sea. We cross at a stone causeway, over which the water runs, and in another mile or two come to the Fitzroy River. This is a true Australian watercourse, and has the usual abruptly alternating depth of channel. Both streams debouch on a sandy sea-beach, a few miles from Portland. The channel mouths are continually shifting, and as the main road from Port Fairy then crossed them, the depth of water was often unpleasantly altered, to the [illegible]st danger of

travellers. Many a misadventure was credited to the "mouth of the Fitzroy," and more than one poor fellow, when the tide was high, essaying to cross with a heavy swag, lost the number of his mess. The proper thing for non-pedestrians at that time was to ride or drive some distance into the waves, where the depth was shallower; but there were said to be quicksands, in which horse or wheel might sink, and, with the surf breaking over, in such case the look-out was bad.

Before reaching this part of the road, at an elevated point of the heath, a full view of the ocean burst suddenly on my view. What a sight it was! A world of forest greenery lay north, east, and west; on the south the tumbling billows of the unbounded sea. Far as eye could reach was the wondrous plain of the South Pacific, stretching away to the farthest range of vision, where it was lost in a soft, shimmering haze. Did I clap my hands and shout "Thalatta! Thalatta!" like the author of *Eōthen?* I had the inclination to do it, I know.

In the distance, lying north-west, were the cliffs and noble bay of Portland—not a very grand town, but noteworthy as the *point d'appui* whence those representative Englishmen and distinguished colonists, the Hentys, commenced the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Australia Felix.

I had the pleasure of knowing these gentlemen; and the longer I live, the stronger becomes my conviction that the genuine Englishman, compacted as he is of diverse races, holding the strong points of each, is the best "all-round man" the earth affords. And the Hentys, as a family, have demonstrated my

proposition perhaps more completely than any other which ever landed on our shores. For, consider what manner of colonisers they were! Explorers, sailors, whalers, farmers, squatters, merchants, politicians (Mr. William Henty was chief secretary of Tasmania)—in all these different avocations the brothers were of approved excellence. Indeed, each displayed in his own personality an aptitude for the whole range of accomplishments.

Stalwart and steadfast were they in body and mind, well fitted to contend with the rude forces of nature, and still ruder individuals, among which their lot was chiefly cast in those days. But withal genial, hilarious, and in their moments of relaxation prone to indulge in the full swing of those high animal spirits which, for the most part, accompany a robust bodily and mental organisation.

Always familiar with the great industry of stock-breeding both in Tasmania and their new home, they imported, from their earliest occupation, the very choicest stud animals, as well as the best implements in all departments of husbandry. "Little John," "Wanderer," imported thoroughbreds, were at one time in their possession. Suffolks and Lincolns were not lacking to ensure production of waggon horses, and in general effect to speed the plough. And I saw at Muntham the first English coaching sire that my eyes had rested upon—a grand upstanding bay horse, with a well-shaped head, lofty forehand, and clean, flat legs. I remember describing him to a horse-loving friend as an enlarged thoroughbred in appearance—a description which would hold good of some of the better sort of

coachers of the present day, the only doubt being whether, having regard to the abnormal shapes of some of our modern racehorses, the coacher's reputation might not suffer by the comparison.

At the time of which I speak Mr. Edward Henty was at Muntham—that Australian "promised land" of rolling downs, hill and dale, all equally fertile, well grassed, well watered; favoured as to climate, soil, and situation; the only drawback being that the great grass crop, summer-ripened, was occasionally ignited in a dry autumn, and, like a prairie fire, swept all before it. In a later day preparation was made for such a contingency, and light waggons, with adequate teams known as the "fire-horses," kept ready to start at a moment's notice for the warning smoke-column. Mr. Frank Henty abode at Merino Downs, the name of which explains the early attention paid by him to the chief source of Australian wealth. Mr. Stephen Henty had his residence in the town of Portland, where at that time he was the leading merchant, and, excepting Mr. Blair, the police magistrate, the leading inhabitant.

No more delightful country home ever existed than the wide-verandahed spacious bungalow, from the windows of which the view was unbroken of the waters of the bay. A well-trimmed garden hedge hid the intervening street and slope to the beach without obstructing the view. There, if anywhere, was to be found true earthly happiness, if such can ever be predicated of this lower world and its inhabitants.

A promising family, full of health, spirits, and intelligence; parents and children alike overflowing

with kindness; hospitality unostentatiously extended both to friends and acquaintances, residents and strangers; a noble property gradually and surely increasing in value; family affection exhibited in its purest form. But

> It is written on the rose—
> Alas! that there, decay
> Should claim from love a part,—
> From love a part!

Where are now the energetic, kindly husband and father, the merry boys and girls, the tender mother, then sheltered and united in that most happy home? The mournfullest task of memory lies in realising how large a toll is yielded in a few fleeting years to the unsparing tax-gatherer Death.

Portland, although devoid of the fertile lands which encompass Port Fairy and Warrnambool, had yet beauties of its own. Its situation was romantic. Lofty cliffs rose from the beach, and from many a picturesque eminence the residences of the towns-people looked on the broad ocean and the peaceful waters of the bay. Still were visible when I first saw Portland the grass-grown furrows turned by the hand of Edward Henty, who had not only accomplished that highly important feat—vitally necessary, indeed, in a settlement poorly provided with grain—but put together the plough with which the first rite to Ceres was performed. In those days a deep-rutted, miry road connected the port with the rich lands of the Wannon—forty miles of sore affliction to the driver of any species of vehicle, bullock drays included. Now the rail has simplified all difficulties. From the glorious "downs country"

to the shore is but a journey of hours—from Hamilton to Melbourne how trifling a stage!

What if the gallant explorer, the immortal Major Mitchell, could return and look upon the network of farms, the metalled roads, the railway terminus, the telegraph, the mail-coach! How would he recall the day when, with his toil-worn party, he reached Portland, and, unaware of the presence there of wayfarers other than themselves, took the Hentys' settlement for one of an escaped gang of bushrangers! How little can we forecast the future in these days of rapid development and almost magical national growth! Besides the Messrs. Henty the principal Wannon squatters were the Winters (George, Samuel, and Trevor), men of remarkable intellect; the Messrs. Coldham were at Grassdale, where, indeed, they have the good fortune still to remain; Lang and Elms were at Lyne, near neighbours to Mount Napier; Acheson Ffrench at Monivae, near Hamilton; John Robertson Nowlan, who rented Murndal for some years from Mr. Samuel Pratt Winter. He afterwards went into partnership with Captain Stanley Carr, an ex-military man domiciled in Silesia, who imported Saxon merino sheep, and had a very proper idea of the "coming event" in Australia—the great rise and development of the merino interest. Farther on, the Hunters (Alick, Jemmy, and latterly Frank and Willie) were at Kalangadoo, Mount Gambier, with Willie Mitchell, Evelyn Sturt, and John Meredith as next-door neighbours. Charles Mackinnon and his partner Watson—am I trenching on sacred confidences when I allude to the sobriquet "Jeeribong"?

What a lot of splendid fellows, to be sure! All the men I have named were gentlemen by birth and education. It may be imagined what a jolly, genial society it was, what a luxurious neighbourhood, when a few miles' ride was a certain find for culture, good fellowship, and the warmest hospitality. While at the race meetings at Portland and Port Fairy, when these joyous comrades amalgamated confessedly for enjoyment, as the old song has it—

> And for that reason,
> And for a season,
> We'll be merry before we go,

there was a week's revelry fit for the gods on high Olympus.

Not only from across the Adelaide border—for Mount Gambier was on the farther side—did both knights and squires wend their way in pilgrimage to the Port Fairy revels, but from Trawalla and Mount Emu, from Warranbeen, Ercildoune, and Buninyong. Adolphus Goldsmith from Trawalla, William Gottreaux from Lilaree, Philip Russell from Carngham (I can hear him now ordering his gray colt's legs to be bandaged the night he rode in), Charley Lyon, Compton Ferrers, Alick Cuningham, Will Wright. Ah!

> We were a gallant company,
> Riding o'er land, sailing o'er sea.
>
> . . . . .
>
> And some are dead and some are gone,
> . . . ay di mi—Alhama!
> And some are robbers on the hills,
> That look along Epirus' valleys.

Well, perhaps not exactly. They abide on those hills

which overlook the winding Thames, and in the season the Serpentine or historic Seine. Any robbery they may engage in is getting the better of unwary brethren at pool, or picking up the odds on the favourite a trifle before the general public is taken into the confidence of the stable.

It is hard to find a poet who expresses your feelings and circumstances with precision. Yet even Byron's friends and fellow-believers in Greek independence have hardly had a more complete dispersion than the comrades of that lost "Arcady the Blest."

We ought to have made the most of those days—of the time which came "before the gold." We never saw their like again. Then we tasted true happiness, if such ever visits this lower world. Every one had hope, encouragement, adequate stimulus to work,—hard work which was well paid,—leading to enterprise, which year by year fulfilled the promise of progress.

Nobody was too rich. No one was wealthy enough to live in Melbourne. Each man had to be his own overseer; had to live at home. He was, therefore, friendly and genial with his neighbours, on whom he was socially dependent. No one thought of going to Europe, or selling off and "cutting the confounded colony," and so on. No! there we were, *adscripti glebæ* as we thought, from a dozen or so to a score of years. It was necessary for all to make the best of it, and very cheery and contented nearly everybody was.

In these days of universal fencing it seems curious to think that from Portland Bay to Geelong, from Geelong to Melbourne, was there never a fenced-in

estate — only the horse and bullock paddocks. Tens of thousands of cattle were managed and controlled by the stockman—as he was then called—(stock-rider came later), with, perhaps, an assistant black boy or white urchin of some sort. It was held that in that respect the cattlemen had the best of it, as one good stockman with occasional aid could look after two or three thousand head of cattle—none of our herds were over this number—whereas every thousand or fifteen hundred sheep needed a shepherd, great loss ensuing if the labour and tendance were not provided.

The great industries of Port Fairy were agriculture on the one hand, and pastoral on the other. The rich lands which lay westward of Warrnambool were gradually sold, always after survey and by auction, having been subdivided into moderate-sized farms. These were purchased by resident farmers or small capitalists who desired to try agriculture for an occupation. There was a good market for produce, and the fame of the Port Fairy wheat crop, as well as that of the potato harvest, commenced to spread.

Than the lands on the banks of the Merai, around Warrnambool, and between that town and Port Fairy, none more fertile are known in Australia. They enjoy the conditions of deep, rich loam, resting on a substratum of tufa and limestone, with perfect natural drainage. So friable, too, as to be ready for the plough immediately after rain. Apparently of an inexhaustible fertility, and lying near the sea, which occasionally sends its spray over the wheat sheaves, they are but little subject to frost. The coast showers preserve the moisture of the soil, and,

whether for grain, roots, or grass, prevent the disastrous desiccation so unhappily common in the fields and pastures of the interior.

As the farmer commenced to press closely upon the pastoral Crown tenant, a certain soreness was engendered, but no complaint of wrong-doing on the part of the Government followed. The squatters accepted the situation; they did their best to lighten the difficulty. Those who had high-class grazing or arable lands bestirred themselves to buy as much around the homestead as would serve to make a moderate estate. The situation and climate being undeniably good, they argued that they could make as much out of a few thousand acres of freehold as formerly from the whole area under an imperfect tenure.

As a matter of fact, when the dreadful "auction day" arrived, the greater portion of the menaced squatters thus saved themselves. Men sympathised with them, too, and did not bid too persistently against the former Lord of the Waste, whose day of dominion was over.

The nearest station to Port Fairy was Aringa, the property of Mr. Ritchie. It was only distant about four miles. Partly arable land, but possessing more "stony rises" and oak ridges, it was capable of growing excellent grass, but not likely to need the plough.

The proprietor made an excellent survey of his run, carefully excluding the more tempting agricultural portions. And so judiciously did he purchase at auction that he found himself the owner of twelve or fourteen thousand acres of splendid grass land,

without a road through it, and therefore capable of being enclosed within a ring fence. The average of price was, I fancy, below 25s. per acre. After fencing this truly valuable freehold, Mr. Ritchie discovered that he could let it for such a yearly rental as would enable him to live handsomely without the responsibility of stock. Mr. Edols, of Geelong, was, I think, the first tenant on a five years' lease, and ever since that day Aringa has been a highly productive estate, covered with a matted sward of clover and rye-grass, adapted either for sheep or cattle, equally profitable to farm or to let.

Yambuk, formerly the property of Lieutenant Andrew Baxter, a retired military officer, did not come off quite so well. But I fancy the present proprietor, Mr. Suter, who has lived there since 1854, or thereabouts, finds that he has a freehold sufficient for all ordinary wants.

"Tarrone," lying to the eastward, was not distant more than ten or twelve miles from Port Fairy. It was occupied in those early days by another army man, Lieutenant Chamberlain. Both of the ex-militaires made exceptionally good squatters, refuting the general experience which does not assign a high rank as successful colonists to soldiers. With enormous reed-beds and marshes, and a certain proportion of stony rises and well-grassed open forest, Tarrone was a model cattle run, carrying generally between two and three thousand head of It was a splendid tract of fattening counti of the grandest drafts of bullocks that West bore the Tarrone brand, "K] formerly belonged to Messrs. Kilgour

but for alleged doing to death of aboriginals the license of these gentlemen had been withdrawn. It was subsequently granted to Mr. Chamberlain. The paternal Government of New South Wales, until late years, kept the whip-hand of the squatters by reason of its power to withhold the only title by which we held our lands, and occasionally, as in the case referred to, the power was exercised. This run was also assailed by the auctioneer's hammer, but being strictly non-agricultural land, it retained virtually its integrity as a grazing estate. "Tarrone" was the station which suffered most on that day of fiery wrath, long remembered as "Black Thursday." All did so more or less; but Mr. Chamberlain, who then lived there, lost fences and homestead, house and furniture, his household escaping barely with their lives. For weeks previously the summer weather had been hot and dry. There was, for a wonder, a cessation of the coast showers. The fated morning was abnormal—sultry and breezeless. The vaporous sky became lurid, darksome—awful. More than one terrified spectator believed that the Last Day had come, and not altogether without reason. The whole colony of Victoria was on fire at the same time, from the western coast to the eastern range of the Australian Alps. Farms and stations were burning at Port Fairy and Portland. The wife and children of a shepherd on the Upper Plenty rivulet, eastward of Melbourne, were burned to death, nearly three hundred miles in another direction. Far out to sea passengers viewed with wonder and alarm a dense black cloud overhanging the coast-line like a pall, such as may have shrouded buried Pompeii when the

volcano heaved its fiery flood. Far from land showers of ashes fell upon the decks of approaching ships.

Though not without expectation of a larger bush-fire than usual, we were chiefly unprepared as the flame-wave rolled in over grass and forest from the north. The fire travelled fast on the preceding night, and the north-east wind rising to a gale towards mid-day, the march of the Destroyer waxed resistless and overpowering. Mr. Chamberlain told us afterwards that, feeling indisposed for exertion, and unaware of actual danger, he was lying down reading *Vanity Fair*. So enthralled was he by Becky Sharp's fascinations that he delayed going out to reconnoitre, though uneasily conscious that the smoke-clouds were thickening.

He went at length on foot. Then he saw, to his astonishment, a wall of fire approaching the homestead with appalling rapidity. He turned and fled for his life, but had barely time to warn the station hands when the devouring element swept after. It was idle to resist in any ordinary method. The flames seemed to leap from the tree tops, as they scaled the trunks, then the higher branches, and were borne on loose fragments of bark far ahead of the line of fire.

In a quarter of an hour each fence, building, and shed of a well-improved homestead was in flames. So great was the heat that after the first flight of the inmates from the dwelling-house, it was impossible to re-enter. Nothing of the contents was saved but a desk and a picture, while the household stood awe-stricken in a plot of garden vegetation, moistening their parched lips from time to time, suffocatir

with heat and smoke, and holding much doubt as to their ultimate safety. As they gazed around they could see the wild birds dropping dead from the forest trees, the kangaroos leaping past with singed and burning fur, while cattle, bellowing with fear and astonishment, dashed wildly to the river-bank, to plunge into the deeper pools.

At Dunmore a better look-out had been kept. By the united efforts of the establishment the flames were arrested on the very verge of the homestead; but so close and desperate was the contest that the garden gate was burned, and Mr. Macknight was carried indoors insensible, having fainted from the severity of the protracted struggle. Had he died it would not have been the only instance on record of the danger of over-exertion with the thermometer at more than a hundred and fifty degrees of Fahrenheit in the sun.

We at Squattlesea Mere were more lucky than our neighbours, inasmuch as the fire took a turn southward, behind Dunmore, and continued its devastating progress through the heaths and scrubs which lay on the north bank of the Shaw. It was in a manner shunted away from our homestead by the region of marsh country which stretched around and beyond it.

CHAPTER XII

GRASMERE

WHAT tales came in from far and near of ruin and disaster—farms and stations, huts and houses, rich and poor!—all had equally suffered in the Great Fire, long remembered throughout the length and breadth of the land. However, a bush fire is not so bad as a drought. A certain destruction of pasture and property takes place, but there is not the wide-spread devastation among the flocks and herds caused by a dry season. Heavy rain set in a short time afterwards, in our district at any rate. The burned pastures were soon emerald-green, and Mr. Chamberlain, who had been compelled to flee to Port Fairy homeless, and there abide till a cottage was built at Tarrone, made sale of a thousand head of fat cattle in one draft before the year was out.

If the system of moderate alienation of Crown lands then prevalent could have been carried out in after years—viz. the disposing of agricultural areas from time to time, as the demand increased—no great harm would have accrued to the pastoral interest, and the legitimate wants of the farmers

would have been fully supplied. The owners of the stations referred to, as the wave of population approached, chiefly applied themselves to secure the purely pastoral portions of the runs, leaving the arable land for its legitimate occupiers. No squatter was then suddenly ruined, while all intending farmers were satisfied. Good feeling was maintained, as each class of producers recognised the necessity for compromise, when the mixed occupation had become a fact. It was far otherwise when the whole land lay open to the selector, who was thus enabled to enter at will into lands which other men's labour had rendered valuable, or to exact a price for refraining.

In good sooth, the pioneer squatter of that day had many and divers foes to contend with. Having done battle with one army of Philistines, another straightway appeared from an unexpected quarter. We had had trouble with our aboriginals: a canine "early Australian," the dingo, had likewise disturbed our rest. He used to eat calves, with perhaps an occasional foal, so we waged war against him. We were not up to strychnine in those days. The first letter I saw in print on the subject was from the ill-fated Horace Wills, whose sheep had been suffering badly at the time. He had come across the panacea somewhere, and lost no time in recommending it to his brother squatters. With the help of our kangaroo dogs, and an occasional murder of puppies, we pretty well cleared them out. As cattlemen, taking a selfish view of the case, we need not have been so enthusiastic. Though he killed an occasional calf, the wild hound did good service in keeping down the kangaroo, which, after

his extinction, proved a far more expensive and formidable antagonist.

We had more than once seen a small pack of dingoes surrounding an "old man kangaroo" in the winter time, when from weight and the soft nature of the ground he is unable to run fast. They also kill the "joeys" or young ones, when too small to run independently, though not to feed. I saw this exemplified on one occasion when returning late from a day's stock-riding. There was still light enough to distinguish surrounding objects, when a doe kangaroo crossed the track in front of me, hard pressed by a red dog close at her haunches. At first I took the pursuer to be a kangaroo dog, but seeing at a second glance that it was a dingo, I pulled up to watch the hunt. The forest was clear; rather to my surprise he gained upon her, and, springing forward, nearly secured a hold. She just got free, and not till then did she rid herself of the burden with which she was handicapped, and without which the dog could not have "seen the way she went," as the stock-riders say.

"Needs must when the devil drives" is an ancient proverb, and some idea of corresponding force must have passed through her marsupial mind as she cast forth from her pouch poor "Joey"—a good-sized youngster of more than a month old. He recognised the situation, for he scudded away with all his might, but was caught and killed by "Br'er" Dingo before I could interfere, his mother sitting up, a few yards off, making a curious sound indicative of wrath and fear. I somewhat unfairly deprived dingo of his supper by placing it carefully out of h

reach in a tree; but in the kangaroo battues which ensued, it more than once occurred to me that I was interfering with a natural law, of which I did not then foresee the consequences.

On the eastern side of Port Fairy lay Grasmere, which on my first introduction to the district, in 1843, was the property of the Messrs. Bolden Brothers. Pleasantly situated on the banks of the Merai, its limestone slopes formed beautiful paddocks for the blue-blooded Bates shorthorns, of which these gentlemen were, at that time, the sole Australian proprietors. They had also a share in the Merang and Moodiwarra runs jointly with Messrs. Farie and Rodger. It was, however, arranged that they should remove their cattle within a certain time, and, I think, early in 1844 the arrangement was carried out. These enterprising and distinguished colonists also owned Minjah, then known as "Bolden's sheep station," now Mr. Joseph Ware's magnificent freehold estate.

A considerable sum of money for those days had been spent, as early as 1843, at Grasmere, when the Rev. John Bolden and I rode in there, having been piloted from the "lower station," where we had spent the previous night, by a grizzled old stock-rider hight Jack Keighran. It was pitch dark, and I was glad to hear the kangaroo dogs set up their chorus, and to know that we were at home. Messrs. Lemuel and Armyne Bolden were then the resident partners.

In the morning I was able to look around at my leisure, and as I had just become inoculated with the shorthorn complaint, which I have never wholly

lost, I had a treat. The paddocks, in size from fifty to two hundred acres, were securely enclosed with three-rail fences, and were well grassed, watered, and sheltered.

I have never ceased to regret that the low prices which ruled then and for several years afterwards, coupled with the failure of a well-considered experiment in shipping salt beef in tierces from Melbourne, should have caused the breaking up of that model stud farm, the dispersion of a priceless shorthorn tribe. I had been previously introduced to "Lady Vane," a granddaughter of "Second Hubback," and her inestimable calf "Young Mussulman," at Heidelberg. Here I had the pleasure of seeing them again, if not on their native heath, still in pastures befitting their high lineage and aristocratic position. Also a former daughter of Lady Vane and the Duke of Northumberland. There grazed the imported cows Lady and Matilda; the imported Bates bulls Fawdon, Tommy Bates, Pagan, and Mahomet. Besides these a score or more of Circular Head shorthorn cows, then perhaps the purest cattle which the colony could furnish.

No pains or expense were spared in the keep and rearing of these valuable—nay *invaluable* cattle —for which, indeed, high prices, for that period, had been paid in England. Everything seemed to promise well for the enterprise—so incalculably advantageous, in time to come, to the herds of Australia. And yet ere the year had rolled round the whole establishment had been disposed of to the Messrs. Manifold. The bulk of the herd cattle we to Messrs. John and Peter Manifold, of L

Purrumbeet, with a proportion of the bulls. The shorthorns were purchased by the late Mr. Thomas Manifold, who for some years after made Grasmere his residence. In the Spring Valley, a lovely natural meadow, were located a lot of beautiful heifers, the progeny of picked "H over 5" cows (the Hawdon brand), and then the best bred herd in New South Wales.

I was present at the purchase of Minjah from the Messrs. Bolden by Mr. Plummer, of the firm of Plummer and Dent, which took place in 1843. With him came Mr. Richard Sutton, as *amicus curiæ*, in the interest of Mr. Plummer, who was a newly-arrived Englishman—verdant as to colonial investments. There was a certain amount of argument; but finally Minjah was sold with fifty head of Spring Valley heifers and a young bull, the price, I think, being £5 per head for the heifers, £50 for the bull, *and the station given in.* This was the origin of the famous Minjah herd. Grasmere and Spring Valley, as also the run of Messrs. Strong and Foster, were subsequently "cut up" and sold. They were too near the town of Warrnambool to escape that fate. Mr. Manifold saved part of his run, but Messrs. Strong and Foster were less fortunate, losing nearly the whole of "St. Mary's." It was not sold, I think, until the gold year, 1851, which accounted for its wholesale annexation. This is the only instance I can recall in that district of the proprietor losing his run in its entirety. The land, however, was exceptionally good, and unmixed with ordinary pastoral country.

The Messrs. Allan Brothers—John, William, and

Henry—held Tooram, and the country generally on the east bank of the Hopkins, where that river flows into the sea. It was a picturesque place, having a fine elevated site, and overlooking the broad, beautiful stream not far from its mouth. I thought they should have called it "Allan Water," but apparently it had not so occurred to them. The country was more romantic than profitable, it was said, in those days, being only moderately fattening, and wonder was often expressed that, having the rich western country all before them when they arrived in 1841, or thereabouts, they did not make a better choice. But pioneers and explorers are often contented with country inferior to that which is picked up by those who come after.

The real secret is that explorers are far more interested in the enterprise and adventure than in the promised land which should be the reward of their labours. They delight in the wilderness, and often undervalue Canaan. No spot could have been more suitably situated than the *locale* the Messrs. Allan selected for ministering to such tastes.

On the south was the coast-line, stretching away to far Cape Otway. On that side they had no neighbours, and Mr. John Allan, who was an intrepid bushman, made hunting and exploring excursions in that direction. I paid them a visit in the early part of 1844. I regarded it as a perfectly lovely place, with all kinds of Robinson Crusoe possibilities. Wrecks, savages, pathless woods, an island solitude —it was on the road to nowhere; nothing was wanting to enable the possessors to enjoy perfect felicity. The romantic solitude has, however, of late

years been invaded by a cheese-factory. No doubt it supports a population, but the charm of the frowning, surf-beaten headland looking over the majestic, limitless ocean—of the broad reaches of the reed-fringed river—of the south-eastern trail leading into "a waste land where no one comes, or hath come since the making of the world"—must be fled for ever.

"St. Ruth's" was the name given to a tract of country which joined Squattlesea Mere on the western boundary. I believe the name and the reputation of the district sold the place more than once, which was hard upon the purchasers, for it was one of the worst runs in Australia. It comprised a few decent limestone ridges—with some passable flats, but the "balance" was scrub, fern, swamp, stringy-bark forest, and heath. Considering it lay in a good district, and enjoyed a fine climate, it was astonishing how it contrived to be so bad. If it did not ruin everybody that was ever connected with it, it was because they had no money to lose, or that exceptional amount of acuteness which enabled them to dodge hard fortune by passing it on.

It was taken up, soon after our performance in that line, by Messrs. Cay and Kaye, sometimes called English and Scotch Kay. The former of these gentlemen, Mr. Robert Cay, was "shown" the run by the Yambuk people, when he rode over a very small bit of it, and, going back to his homestead on the Lodden, sent a trustworthy man up with two or three hundred head of cattle, who formally occupied it.

A hut and yard were built—the cattle broken in,

more or less—and the occupation was complete. A year or two after Mr. Cay sold out to Mr. Adolphus Goldsmith, of Trawalla, for a reasonable price, the cattle to be taken by book-muster. Mr. Goldsmith had a herd at Trawalla, which was being encroached upon by the sheep. He required room, and bought this curiously unprofitable place to put them on. The Port Fairy district, I should say, had a great reputation; so had the adjoining runs. Mr. Goldsmith could not imagine that a run so near Tarrone, Yambuk, and Dunmore could be so very bad. Buyer and seller rode over it together. At the end of the day Mr. Cay said, "Look here, old fellow! I never saw half as much of the run before. I had no idea it was such an infernal hole, I give you my word. If you like you can throw up your bargain!"

"Oh no!" quoth Dolly, "I'll stick to it. It will answer my purpose."

The end of it was that Mr. Cunningham, as overseer, came down in charge of five or six hundred well-bred cattle, which were turned out at St. Ruth's after a reasonable "tailing," and presently were all over the district. Mr. Cunningham, as I have before stated, was one of the most energetic men possible, but he failed to make St. Ruth's a payable speculation. The cattle never fattened; they became wild; they could never be mustered with certainty; they furnished none of the pleasing results with which cattle in a crack district are generally credited.

Eventually Mr. Goldsmith lost patience, and sold this valuable property to a former manager of his

own—Mr. Hatsell Garrard. This gentleman had accompanied Mr. Goldsmith from England, and, it was said, had chosen for him the celebrated "Cornborough," a son of Tramp, a grandson of Whalebone, and one of the grandest horses that ever looked through a bridle. A good judge of stock, both in England and Australia, how Mr. Garrard came to buy such a place is "one of the mysteries." The terms were easy, probably, and the price tempting; he thought "it couldn't hurt at the price." The homestead, too (Mr. Cunningham was a great improver), was now very comfortable. That and the name together did it.

Mr. Garrard, who was a most genial, jolly, but withal tolerably shrewd old boy, kept the run for a year or two, just selling cattle enough to pay his way, when *he* dropped on a chance to "unload" and make a sale to Messrs. Moutray and Peyton.

The former, like the seller, had abounding experience, had lived on an adjoining run, was quite capable of managing his own affairs, yet *he* went into it with his eyes open. His only excuse was, that store cattle were worth £4 and £5 a head "after the gold," and he thought he saw his way. His partner, Mr. Peyton, was a young Englishman of good family, vigorous and ardent, just the man to succeed in Australia, one would have thought. He was told exactly and truly by his friends all the bad points of the run; but it was difficult in that day of high prices to find an investment for two or three thousand pounds, so *he*, being anxious to start, made the plunge. In a couple of years the partnership was dissolved, Moutray having

saved some of his money, and Peyton having lost every shilling.

They sold to Mr. Doughty, who had formerly owned a sheep station near Mount Gambier. He was a married man, and preferred, for some reasons, the Port Fairy district to live in. He was economical, active, a famous horseman, and a good manager. He tried "all he knew," but was beaten in a little more than a year, and "gave it best." I heard of other purchasers, but about that time I severed my connection with the district and followed the fortune of St. Ruth's no further. Probably, if cleared, drained, laid down in grasses at the rate of £10 per acre, fenced and subdivided, it might, under the weeping western skies, produce good pasture. But it always was an unlucky spot.

In the strongest contradistinction to St. Ruth's—a regular man-trap, and as pecuniarily fatal as if specially created for Murad the Unlucky—was the station generally known as "Blackfellows' Creek," lying east of Eumeralla. By the way, the original pathfinders of Port Fairy had a pretty fancy in the naming of their watercourses. There were Snaky Creek, Breakfast Creek, and, of course, Deep Creek and Sandy Creek. Now, this Blackfellows' Creek was as exceptionally good a station as St. Ruth's was "t'other way on." It was proverbially and eminently a fattening run; and on the [illegible] "who drives fat oxen should himself [illegible] owner, Mr. William Carmichael, was, and [illegible] been, far and away the fattest man in

CHAPTER XIII

SUPERIOR FATTENING COUNTRY

BLACKFELLOWS' CREEK, or "Harton Hills," as the proprietor caused it to be designated when it commenced to acquire fame and reputation, was a striking example of the well-known faith held by experienced pastoralists, that a good run will manage itself, and make lots of money for its owner, whereas no amount of management will cause much difference in the profits or losses of a bad run.

Blackfellows' Creek was proverbially managed "anyhow." There was a large herd of cattle upon it, which certainly enjoyed about the smallest amount of supervision of any cattle in the world, not being Red River bisons, Chillingham wild cattle, or the *Bos primigenius*. Twice a year they were mustered to brand; a little oftener, perhaps, to get out the fat cattle. Sometimes there was a stock-rider, often none at all for months. The owner enjoyed the inestimable advantage of having been born north of the Tweed, a fact which indisposed him to employ more labour than was absolutely necessary. It also prevented him from wasting his

ready money on "improvements." The yards were generally referred to as a proof of how *very* little expenditure was really necessary on a cattle station.

"I wish I'd been a Scotchman, Rolf," said Fred Burchett to me once, in a contemplative mood. "I should have had a good run and 20,000 sheep by this time." "True—most true, friend of my soul; the same here—and we should not only have had them,—the acquisition is not so difficult,—but have *kept* them. That's where one division of the empire differs so much from the other." Now, the owner of Blackfellows' Creek, partly by reason of his abnormal girth and a sort of Athelstane-the-Unready kind of nature, never did anything. Yet he prospered exceedingly, and waxed more and more wealthy and rotund. All the stock-riders in the district came cheerfully to his muster, knowing that they would be treated with a certain easy-going liberality, and, moreover, be sure to find quantities of unbranded calves and strayed stock, all in the best possible condition, and never driven off the run or impounded from the richly-abounding and carelessly-ordered pastures of Blackfellows' Creek. I myself secured at a muster, and sold there and then, a whole lot of fat bullocks to Mooney, the cattle-dealer, who was lifting a draft at the time. They were a portion of my Devil's River store lot, which had, with correct taste and calculation, taken up their abode at Blackfellows' Creek on the first w
their arrival. They had not my statio
but their own hieroglyph was sufficient
them in those Arcadian times. I
Mooney's perfectly nego

sum. They had fattened up wonderfully,—great, raw-boned, old-fashioned Sydney-siders,—and looked like elephants. The only remark the owner of the run made on the transaction was, "As they had done so well, it was a pity that more of them hadn't come at the same time."

It was indeed a lovely bit of country, speaking from a grazing standpoint. There was plenty of water in the Blackfellows' and other unpretending channels to provide for the stock in all seasons without obtrusive parade. The run itself consisted principally of open well-grassed forest land, with a large proportion of "stony rises," and several marshes, very useful in the summer. Not an acre of waste or indifferent land was there upon it. Nobody knew where the boundaries were, there being no natural features of any kind, and the current belief was that it was much larger than was generally supposed. It did not seem to have any of the ordinary drawbacks to which other squattages were exposed. In spite of its ill-omened name, the blacks had never been "bad" there. If they had killed a few cattle no one would have minded, and I have no doubt they would have discontinued the practice voluntarily.

As a matter of course, the cattle were always "rolling fat." There was never the least trouble of selling a draft to be taken from the camp. The dealers gave the highest price, and bid against one another. Even the two-year-old steers were often taken, so "furnished" and "topped up" were they. How they were bred could never be ascertained, and was popularly supposed to be wholly unknown to

any white man of the period. Bulls were seldom bought. Not the smallest trouble was taken about their breeding. No money was spent, except upon the stud, in which were some noble Clydesdales—on one of them, by the way, I once saw the proprietor, and very worthily mounted he was. The animal in question was a son of old Farmer's Favourite, a gigantic gray, no doubt having some blood on the side of the dam, and seventeen hands in height. He was active and well paced, and carried his nineteen stone most creditably.

There were sheep on the run as well as cattle. From the richness of the soil and herbage they suffered a good deal with foot-rot, which they were permitted to cure by nature's own healing art. But they paid pretty well, too, growing a heavy fleece, and gradually increasing in numbers—shepherds, ailments, and occasional free selection by dingoes notwithstanding.

Mr. Carmichael either bought the place very early or "took it up"—the latter most likely. Such a property was, presumably, not often in the market; but the proprietor told me that he had once placed it under offer, at what he doubtless considered a very fancy price, to Mr. Jack Buchanan, a handsome, spirited young Scot, who bought one of the Messrs. Boldens' runs—the Lake—in 1844. The extreme fancy price being £3 per head for the cattle and 10s. all round for the sheep, the run about a quarter stocked!

After the gold "broke out," the drafts of fat cattle from Harton Hills began to tell up in such figures on the right side of his banking account that

the owner saw the necessity for acquiring the fee-simple. This was effected, like everything else there, without much trouble. A good house was built, fencing was put up. Thousands of acres were purchased, and the whole run pretty well "secured," out of its own profits solely, by the time the invasion of the free-selecting Goths and Vandals under Gavan Duffy's Act took place. Mr. Carmichael ultimately retired, and betook himself to a town life. But, however his idyll ended, no better example than Blackfellows' Creek ever demonstrated the soundness of the old squatting belief before alluded to, that *the run is everything*—stock, improvements, management, capital, etc., being all secondary considerations.

It has been mentioned in the early portions of these reminiscences that the Mount Rouse station, originally taken up by Mr. John Cox, had been resumed by the Government of the day, represented by His Honour the Superintendent, and devoted to the use and benefit of the aborigines of the district. Some compunction seems to have been felt by Mr. La Trobe, a humane and highly-cultured person, at the rapid decrease and deterioration of the native race. Whether he originated the idea of an aboriginal protectorate, with a staff of officials known as "Black Protectors," I cannot state with precision. A certain missionary named Robinson had the credit of inducing the remnant of the wild men and women of Tasmania to surrender to the clemency of the Government. They were then, with a somewhat doubtful generosity, presented with an island, and maintained thereon at the charges

of the State. It does not appear that they lacked henceforth any material comfort. But the fierce savages who had long harassed the outlying settlers, and who possessed considerably more "bull-dog" in the way of courage than their continental congeners, refused to thrive or multiply when "cabined, cribbed, confined," even though they had alternation of landscape in their island home, and but the restless sea for their encircling boundary. They pined away slowly; but a few years since the last female of the race died. The monotonous comfort told on health and spirits. It was wholly alien to the constitution of the wild hunters and warriors who had been wont to traverse pathless woods, to fish in the depths of forest streams, to chase the game of their native land through the lone untrampled mead, or the hoar primeval forests which lay around the snow-crested mountain range.

The missionary diplomatist displayed an amount of nerve and astuteness which would have led to promotion in other departments. He crossed the straits to Victoria, and, if I mistake not, held council with Mr. La Trobe. Whether *propter hoc* or only *post hoc*, an aboriginal protectorate was established, and Mr. Cox had the honour of giving up a property worth now say about £100,000 for the presumed advantage of the black brother.

It was no trifling loss. Even in those days the "Mount Rouse Stones" was an expression which made the mouth of a cattleman to water. It was the richest run in a rich fattening district. The conical hill, so named, was an extinct volcano, which towered over a wide extent of lava country and

open lightly-timbered forest. The lava lands alternated with great marshes. Strayed and other cattle found there, when recovered, were always spoken of by the stock-riders as being "mud-fat." When once cattle were turned out there they never seemed to have any inclination to roam, being instinctively aware, doubtless, that they could never hope to find such shelter, such pasture, such luxurious lodging anywhere else.

I remember Charles Burchett remarking one day that it would be a fairly promising speculation to bring up a thousand head of store cattle and *lose* them at the foot of Mount Rouse; after a short, unsuccessful search, to depart, and return in the autumn, when they would be sure to be found all fat, and within a dozen miles of the hill. He reflected for a moment, and then added thoughtfully, "I think a popular man might do it."

However, there was no fighting with the powers that be in those days. There was no Parliament—no press of any great weight—no fierce democracy—no redress nearer than Sydney. It was "a far cry to Lochow." So Mr. Cox shifted his stock and servants out, and Dr. Watton moved in, took possession as Protector of Aborigines, and gathered to him the remnant of the former lords of the soil, with their wives and their little ones. The intention was humane; the act was one of mercy and justice towards the fast-fading children of the waste; but it never could be demonstrated to be more successful in results than the Tasmanian experiment.

There were several protectorate stations established about the same time, one notably near Ballarat,

one, I think, on the Wimmera, and one on the Murray. Long after a Moravian Mission was organised for their behoof at Lake Boga, near Swan Hill. All came to naught. The blacks visited them from time to time, when the season was unpropitious, or for other reasons. They were fed and clothed. The younger ones were taught to read and write, and received religious instruction. But the whole thing doubtless appeared to them unendurably dull and slow, and like all savages, and a largish proportion of whites, being passionately averse to monotony, they deserted by degrees, and pursued a more congenial career as wanderers through wood and wold, or as servants and labourers at the neighbouring stations. There they could earn money, and, I fear me, proceeded to "knock down" the same by means of periodic alcoholic indulgence, "as nat'ral as a white man."

Meanwhile good old Dr. Watton, a genial, cultured English gentleman, lived a peaceful patriarchal life at Mount Rouse—not, I should imagine, vexing his soul unduly at the instability of the heathen. They were welcomed and kindly treated when they came, not particularly regretted when they chose to depart. All attempt at coercion would have been, of course, inexpedient and ludicrously ineffective. So matters at the "Reservation" wore on. The doctor's small herd of cattle, the descendants of a few milch cows needed for the family, were wonderful to behold by reason of their obesity, as they lay and lounged about the spring which trickled down a plough-furrow in front of the cottage.

The pastoralists never approved of the protectorat-

system. They accused certain of the protectors—not the gentlemen to whom I refer—of instructing the blacks that if whites shot them it would be considered murder, and the offenders hanged, but that if they speared the cattle or the stockmen occasionally, it was only, let us say, an error of judgment, for which they would not suffer death. This probably was an exaggeration, and some allowance must be made for the habitual antagonism of pioneers to "Injuns" of any sort or kind.

If these establishments did no particular good, they did no harm. They afforded shelter to the aged and infirm of both sexes, and they attempted, in all good faith, to teach the young the great truths of the Christian's hope in life and death. Still, I know but of *one* instance where any permanent educational good resulted to the pure race. Yet I took much interest in the question, and remember watching closely the career of a highly intelligent half-caste, who had been brought up by Mr. Donald M'Leod at Moruya. He was a tall, well-made man, intelligent, "reliable," and shrewd. He married a respectable emigrant girl. They had two children, and a situation under Cobb and Co. At this stage of ethnological interest a snake bit him. The poor fellow died, and I lost the opportunity of watching the development of the mixed blood.

After the Mount Rouse aboriginal station had been devoted to this philanthropical purpose for a certain number of years, it became gradually apparent to the official mind, from the well-nigh complete disappearance of aboriginals, that its utility had ceased.

It was accordingly disestablished. One would have thought that the obviously fair thing would have been to have handed back the right of run to the former owner. This was before any gospel of free selection had been preached, and while the "poor man" was still a harmless, contented unit of the body politic, ignorant of his wrongs, and unacquainted with the fatal flavour of vote by ballot. The license could have been granted afresh to Mr. Cox or his executors, and no one would have thought of protesting. But no! With a certain cheese-paring economy, of which Governments are often justly accused, it was decided to let the right of run by tender. Though assessments were high enough, no one in those days dreamed of offering more than £200 or £300 annually for the mere grass right of any run. Mount Rouse was hardly improved in any way. Every one was considerably astonished when it was proclaimed that the tender of the Messrs. Twomey had been accepted for £900 per annum! This was a rental for the waste lands of the Crown with a vengeance! It was thought that it never would pay the daring speculators. However, the event showed that the Messrs. Twomey had gauged the capabilities of the run accurately enough. They had a small station close by, and had made their calculations justly. They put sheep on, fenced, and presumably made money thereby, as they eventually purchased the greater portion of the freehold.

CHAPTER XIV

BURCHETT OF "THE GUMS"

THIS was the well-known name of an exceedingly choice run close to Nareeb Nareeb, on Muston's Creek, and at an early period in the occupation of the Messrs. Charles, Henry, and Fred Burchett. The name was allotted by Charles, who said that as the old country places were christened "The Oaks," "The Ashes," "The Beeches," and so on, he thought it befitting that an Australian homestead should be known as "The Gums." So mote it be; and I fancy Mr. Ross, the present owner, has by no means changed the name.

Charles Burchett was a humourist of the first water, and as such delighted in by his numerous friends. The district was hardly ever without the excitement of "Burchett's last." He had a serious, tentative, doubtful way of bringing out his good things, which heightened the effect.

"The Gums," like Dunmore, boasted a better library than ordinary, and there was set on foot the Mount Rouse Book Club, which, founded on a moderate subscription, and compelling members to

send round the books at monthly intervals, provided mental food for a goodly number of friends and neighbours.

Charles Burchett and his brother Fred were both somewhat deaf. Whether or not the slight infirmity concentrated the reflective powers, certain it is that they resembled each other closely in being exceptionally original and amusing in conversation.

Occasionally Mr. Charles Burchett's difficulty in hearing led to diverting cross purposes, as in the case of his celebrated interview with the bushrangers. He and a friend, it is related, some time in the early days, met with two men, one of whom carried a gun. They addressed themselves to his companion, who appeared to be, from the expression of his countenance, much interested in their remarks.

Mr. Burchett looked at them with an inquiring air. "What do they want, Scott?" he said, in his resonant, high-pitched voice, accentuating always the last word of the sentence. "Do they want *work?*"

None of them could help laughing, it is said; but the man with the gun, observing the gentleman place his hand to his ear, raised the gun sharply to a level with his breast, by way of explaining matters.

Again Mr. Burchett looked up with a grave and meditative expression. Then he addressed the spoiler—"I say, take away that gun, it might go off." Even the hardened old hand was not proof against this characteristic jest; he put down his gun in order to laugh in comfort. However, it was explained that business was business. So having relieved Burchett and his friend of their horses and

cash, the robbers departed. But they behaved with civility, and a ten-mile walk was the worst of the affair. The horses were afterwards found at no great distance from the spot, and returned to their owners.

Unfortunately, as it happened, the fraternal triumvirate at "The Gums" held diverse opinions as to the stock upon which to stake the fortunes of the firm. Henry Burchett was gifted with a strongly arithmetical turn, in consequence of which he was generally alluded to by Charles as "my brother Cocker." A calculation of the average value of the wool-clip led him doubtless to decide—with considerable accuracy, as events proved—in favour of sheep. Charles and Fred preferred cattle. In the end Charles sold his share of run and stock, and commenced a business in Melbourne. Having made a pilgrimage to Riverina, riding one wiry hackney the whole way there and back, without apparent distress to man or beast, Henry posed as the apostle of a new faith on his return, after beholding, near Deniliquin, what he then decided to be the true home of the merino sheep, and purchasing for a small price a certain run on the Billabong, since tolerably well known to wool-buyers as "Coree." He bought sheep with which to stock it, and removed those still at "The Gums." He it was who first placed a dam across the uncertain watercourse of the Billabong, and thus aided the inception of the great system of water-storage now so universal. It was a primitive time enough on the Billabong, one may be sure. The late Mr. Sylvanus Daniel was a man in authority at Deniliquin, then known as one of "The Royal Bank" stations. Some of his good

stories the wayfarer from Port Fairy brought back with him, so that the fame of that gentleman's hospitality and genial temperament reached the colony of Victoria years before he migrated to the north-western district of New South Wales.

Henry Burchett retained his share in "The Gums" after his purchase of Coree, but, wishing to concentrate his investments, he—unfortunately for his partner and himself—decided to realise on the Port Fairy property. The sale of "The Gums" accordingly took place. It was, of course, before the gold—only one year I think. The price of a first-class, well-improved, fattening run, with a good herd of 1500 cattle thereon, was—what does any one think?—£2 per head! Yes, at this melancholy price did "The Gums" pass into the hands of Mr. Henry Gottreaux, a gentleman lately arrived in the colony, formerly in the Austrian service. He was a brother of William Gottreaux, of Lilaree; he had, therefore, the advantage of the advice of an experienced colonist.

Mr. Gottreaux did not look, to our eyes, the "man for Galway"; or likely to make much out of a cattle run in those hard-riding, hard-living days. Tall and soldierly-looking, with a big moustache, he had a bluff, German-baron sort of air. He was portly withal, and, though a cavalry man, not up to much in the "cutting-out" or cattle-muster line. The first thing to which he devoted his energies was the building of a spacious, [illegible]ndahed brick cottage, dooming the snug ol[illegible] [illegible]ad, where we had all spent so many p[illegible] do duty as barracks and out-offices. [illegible] of one of the visitors, who, a[illegible]

to help at the muster, whether it would not be easy to transmit his share of the profits to a friend in England, who had an interest—as a sleeping partner—in the station.

The man whom he addressed smiled inwardly, and sardonically replied, "Very easy." We thought this a good joke when it was handed over to us a week after. But Mr. Gottreaux was right, and we were all wrong, proving how difficult it was to decide in such matters unless all the factors of the sum are in view. In the first place, the new proprietor was a man of brains and method, culture and knowledge of the world. He did not scurry about in the camp on the stock-horse of the period—it was not his *métier;* but he paid and controlled a good stock-rider who did. He lived comfortably, preferring, reasonably, to dine at ease after the business of the day was concluded. But he kept his accounts correctly, and provided that the balance should be on the right side. The seasons were favourable; they are rarely otherwise in the pleasant west country, to the green pastures of which fate had guided the "bold Uhlan." And then—trump card of all—the Gold Magician played shortly afterwards. He threw down an ace—waved his wand. The cattle which our friend purchased at £2, with right of run added, became worth £10 per head. So he *had* profits to remit to his partner after all, by no means of small annual amount either.

Terenallum was in early days the property of Messrs. Lang and Elms, who considered it a fairly paying sheep run, though bare of timber and rather desolate of aspect. Disadvantageously for the firm,

as it turned out, Mr. Elms, the resident partner, was tempted by what was then thought to be a high price —12s. per head or so, with about one-third of the stock it afterwards carried—to sell to Mr. Russell of The Leigh. He invested in a presumably richer country between The Grange and the Eumeralla, and, I should think, never ceased to regret the exchange. The new runs were chiefly cattle country, being well-grassed forest, not over dry in winter, and therefore in those days looked upon as liable to foot-rot. The eastern subdivision, called "Lyne," was at no great distance from Mr. Cox's Werrongourt station. This transaction illustrates the errors of judgment so often made by pioneer squatters, men of exceeding shrewdness and energy notwithstanding. So George Wyndham Elms sold Terenallum, now proverbially one of the most valuable sheep properties west of the Barwon, and purchased a run which must have paid indifferent interest on capital for long afterwards. Yet the seller was sufficiently experienced, could work with both hands and head, had confronted all the regulation pioneer troubles—bad shepherds, blacks, low wool, everything—had shepherded on a pinch, and slept in a watch-box. Then, when all was well and a fortune coming to meet him, he was fated to ruin everything for the sake of change. *Mais, telle est la vie.*

Lyne and the other station were good enough, fairly watered, splendidly grassed, and so on; but the cautious critics said they would never make up for Terenallum. And they didn't.

The original cattle had been neglected, it would appear. Among them was a large proportion of

bullocks which declined with fiendish obstinacy to fatten. They would do anything but go off to the butcher. They oppressed the rest of the herd, showed a bad example, and paid nothing. They were what are known by the stock-riders as "ragers" or "pig-meaters." Fierce of aspect, and active as buffaloes, they appear with regularity at each muster, but are never permitted the chance of road-adventure with any buyer of fat cattle. The price offered for them is generally so small that in many instances the owner ceases to form plans for their conversion into cash, and, if easy-going, permits them to eat grass and demoralise the herd indefinitely. The run was now worked with fair results for a year or two, but it soon became apparent that it was not likely to return the same sort of dividends which were so satisfactory each year at Terenallum. This probably tended towards discussion between the partners. However that might have been, a division of the runs took place. Mr. Lang retained Lyne, with the herd of cattle depastured thereon, while Mr. Elms removed to that portion of the area which lay nearer to the town of Hamilton. Upon this he built a new homestead, and proceeded to convert it into a sheep station.

Mr. Lang had visited England more than once during the partnership, and so loosened his hold upon matters colonial. It has generally happened, within my experience at least, that a squatter who permitted himself to behold "the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them," rarely settled down into a contented colonist upon returning to Australia. So Mr. Lang put Lyne into the market. It was

sold to Captain Stanley Carr, a retired military officer, who had passed years at a German court, and held property in Silesia. There, it seems, he had acquired a taste for high-class merinoes. He had been tempted to visit Australia, probably as a larger field for investment, bringing with him some good sheep of the type then prevailing, and fashionable in the country of his adoption. These were sent to Lyne, where they were only moderately praised by the sheepholders of the district, being acknowledged to be fine as to quality of fleece, but considered small and delicate of frame.

Captain Stanley Carr, by birth Scoto-Irish, was a genial and polished personage, not altogether averse to the privilege accorded to travellers, but most amusing and agreeable. He bought, as did Mr. Gottreaux, "before the gold." The price he paid was therefore moderate, leaving a large margin for profit in the rising markets which were imminent, and of which he shortly experienced the advantage. Residing for a few months at Lyne, he made himself popular with his neighbours, who were nothing loath to visit and entertain a courtier, a man of the world, and a *raconteur* at once so experienced and original. He justified the shrewd outlook upon events which had caused him to become an investor in the first instance, by prophesying an extraordinary development of Australian prosperity which was to be rapid and astonishing. The soil, the climate, the extent of the waste lands of the Crown, all excited his admiration. The captain's pre-auriferous predictions have since received curiously close fulfilment.

Our gallant pastoral comrade had some knowledge

of sheep-farming. For the management of a mixed herd of cattle, after the Australian fashion, he was as unfitted as the confidential German shepherd of his priceless Silesian ewes to "run" a South American *saladero*. Wisely, therefore, he took the neighbours into his confidence, requesting the advice which was cheerfully given. He was, in the first instance, by them adjured to cull the herd severely—to that end to eliminate without delay all the bovine "larrikins" (the word had not then been coined, but an analogous social remedy may yet in future ages be legally applicable) by boiling them down. There happened to be at Port Fairy in that brooding year just before the gold—and what embryo events were not then ripening in the womb of fate!—a regularly-appointed *saladero*. How much more concise is the expression than "a boiling-down establishment where salting beef for exportation is also carried on," and yet foolish utilitarians see no advantage in schoolboys learning Greek and Latin. But this savours of digression. Such an institution was then in full working order, organised for the reduction of the "dangerous classes" of the bovine neighbourhood into tallow and corned beef. It was managed by Mr. M'Cracken, and (of course) subsidised by Mr. William Rutledge. "Unto this last" the Lyne larrikins were by a consensus of notables forthwith relegated.

CHAPTER XV

WORK AND PLAY

THE captain's first cattle-muster was fixed for a certain day. I had the honour of being invited specially to superintend the classing and drafting of the bullocks, retaining the presumably marketable, and condemning the irreconcilables. I was happy to accede, but a slight difficulty stood in the way. The night preceding the muster had been devoted to the coming ball at Dunmore, an anxiously-anticipated festivity, to which all Port Fairy was bidden, and from which no loyal Western man could be absent if alive. Certainly not the writer, Terpsichore's not least ardent votary. The difficulty was to combine drafting and dancing with a conscientious attention to both. "Minorca lies in the middle sea." Lyne is half-way between Dunmore and Hamilton—over twenty miles anyhow. The drafting would commence at sunrise—the dancing would continue till daylight. Such trivial discrepancies were negotiable, however,

> Ere nerve and sinew
> In the consulship

The ball was in its way perfect, "with music, moonlight, love, and flowers," probably in the usual proportions. Daylight found the revellers still unsated; but an hour before the first tremulous dawn wavelet rippled over the pale sky-line I had doffed the canonicals, slipped on boots and breeches, mounted my favourite hackney—"The Gaucha" to wit—and was stretching out along the track to Eumeralla at the rate of twelve miles an hour.

The summer morn was refreshingly cool, the first hour's ride delicious; then an increasing drowsiness made itself felt, and ere long I would have given all the world to lie down under a tree and sleep till noon. But the inclination was sternly repressed, and less than another hour's ride brought the creek in view, below the blackwood-crowned slopes of Lyne, one of the loveliest spots in all the West. The position of the stock-yard was denoted from afar by the great cloud of dust which rose pillar-like to the clear sky, while the "roaring" of the restless, excited cattle had been audible long before the dust-cloud was visible.

It was a lovely, clear, summer morning; yet, as I rode onward, the sentence of Holy Writ kept ceaseless iteration through my brain as curiously apposite, while ever and anon through the green forest echoed the deep-resounding lowing of the imprisoned herd—"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever." As I rode up to the yard a score of stock-horses stood under the trees. The ocean of unbroken greenery that lay to the eastward was flame-tinted by the rising sun, but, early as was the hour, work had begun. Joe Twist of Werron-

gourt, and Mackay of Eumeralla, were at the drafting gates; the cattle were running through. I was just in time to enter upon my duty as classifier, at which arduous and delicate task I continued till noon. A half-hour for the mid-day meal, a few minutes' grace while pipes are lighted, then through the long, dusty hours of the hot afternoon the laborious, exciting work is ceaselessly carried on. Strangers and pilgrims, calves and clear-skins, are separated at the same time. The sun declines, dips lower still, and lower. The day is done, and a highly respectable amount of necessary work has been performed. The liberated herd streams back in a score of droves to familiar pastures. Two hundred and twenty "boilers" are safe in the small yard, the which will be started for their last drive on the following morning. The stock-riders are accommodated on the station. Some ride home—those who had no calves or stray cattle on their minds; the rest remain, ready to give a hand with the boiling-down draft next day. I partake of Captain Carr's hospitality, warmly thanked for my exertions. Do I not doze off almost before the evening's meal is concluded? I beg to be excused on the ground of fatigue, and depart incontinently for bed thereafter. Do I turn round until sunrise next morning? I trow not.

But I was soon in the saddle then, and away with the drove referred to. What a rush they made when the gate was opened!—what a pace they went for the first mile or two! I can see Joe Twist now on his favourite stock-horse—a steed that even

master cared not to ride without his permission—going like a Comanchee Indian, the merest trifle less than racing speed, parallel with a tossing forest of horns, his bridle-hand low, his stock-whip raised threateningly, the eager horse's head now on the ground, now raised higher than a nervous rider would choose. Was there another man "steadying the lead" on the opposite side, right well mounted also, gallant in the pride of youthful horsemanship and the full inspiration of "God's glorious oxygen"? It may have been so. Ah me! those were pleasant days. Would they might return! Even as I write,

> Still comes the memory sweet
> Of bygone hours, long-gathered flowers
> Pressed by our youth's gay feet.

It may not have been wholly in the interests of an Australian merino principality that our shores were honoured by the captain's company and capital. With him—and to a certain extent, it was understood, indebted to his guardianship—came a Prince of Augustenburg, who had not then succeeded to his present exalted position. This royal personage was apparently not deeply interested in the pastoral life of Australia, and remained to the last unconcerned about the weights and fineness of fleece of merino sheep. Providence had arranged his destiny so as to be unaffected by the wool market, or even by the prevalence of dry seasons. He also spoke English indifferently, and, thus handicapped, preferred the sylvan shades of Toorak and the tempered solitude of a club smoking-room to the primeval waste. His more mercurial senior mean

while utilised his colonial experience to some purpose, as the sequel will show.

Possibly a strict provincial life at Lyne became monotonous after the "boilers" had realised some 30s. per head. The Ballarat diggers would have eaten them gaily at £7 or £8 each a year or two after, but we did not forecast that and a few other unimportant changes. After the calves were branded, after the German shepherd had with paternal care cured the Silesians of foot-rot—(how different from the demeanour of Australian Corydon puffing at his foul pipe, and double-blanking the sheep, with everybody connected with the place, from the ration-carrier upwards, as he pares the offending hoof)—after these, and divers other engrossing duties, had helped to hurry along the stream of Time, the captain delegated such and the like, permanently, to Mr. J. R. Nowlan, a gentleman who dwelt hard by, constituting him his managing partner. He then betook himself with his Prince back to Europe, *via* Panama, a route then coming into fashion with Australian home-returning voyagers. The travellers—including, I think, Messrs. Lang and Winter—had nearly completed their foreign tour in an abrupt and melancholy fashion. While crossing the Chagres river (I will not certify as to the name, but, if doubtful on the point, communicate with Baron Lesseps, Captain Mayne Reid, and Mr. Frederick Boyle) their light bark sprang a leak. They were partly canoe-wrecked, and left by their boatman upon a sandbank in the mid-stream of a big, rapid river, swarming with alligators. The river was rising, which tended to limit their period of security. In this strait, a small

dug-out was seen approaching from the farther bank. The Indian paddler explained by pantomime that he could take but two. That was self-evident. One passenger even suggested risk. Then arose a generous contention. To the Prince was unanimously yielded the *pas*. The second place the captain was prayed to take. "No," said the gallant veteran; "you fellows have all the world before you. I have had my innings, and a deuced good one too. *Moi qui parle!* Get in, either of you; I'm dashed if I do." The time was rapidly growing shorter; the sandbank contracting its area. The boatman gesticulated. The alligators, presumably, were expectant. It was no time for overstrained ceremony. One of the squatters stepped in, and the frail craft swirled into the eddying current. It returned in time, and the *Greytown Herald* missed a sensational paragraph.

That was in other respects an exciting trip. Mr. Lang found himself, when at Panama, relegated to a huge dormitory, crowded like a sixpenny boarding-house. Comforting himself with the reflection that it was but for a night, he invoked Somnus, all vainly. The groans of a sick man on the next couch forbade repose. "What's the matter with him?" he inquired at length of his nearest "strange bedfellow." "Only Isthmus fever," was the answer. My friend shuddered, knowing how the railway labourers were even then being decimated.

"And why is the bed between you and me vacant?" he went on to inquire. "They buried a cholera patient out of it this morning. You don't happen to have a cigar, do you?"

It was too late to retreat. The streets were none too safe. But it may well be believed that the ex-owner of Lyne wished himself back among the blackwood trees, or even in the stock-yard, were the day ever so dusty, and what delicately constituted persons term oppressive. And when the red sun aroused him from the troubled slumber which ended the night's unrest, he naturally doubted whether cholera or "the fever" would first lay upon him a fatal grasp.

Mr. Nowlan, an experienced manager, after Captain Carr's departure "worked" Lyne pretty vigorously, selling the original herd as they became fit for market, and putting on store cattle to the full carrying capacity of the run. The gold discovery of course transmuted profits magically. At the first onset of the revolution, cattle stations reaped most of the benefit, so much less labour being required than on sheep stations. Within a few years not only had large profits been realised for the partnership, but the value of the property had quintupled. An estate of freehold land had been purchased at Melton, near Melbourne, from the profits of fat stock. A thousand head of cattle more than the station had been purchased with were now depastured. At the post-auriferous prices then obtaining, Lyne, with 3000 head of cattle, was a very different property from that which Captain Carr had originally purchased.

At this stage a plenipotentiary from Captain Carr arrived in the person of Baron von Loesecke, a jolly, blue-eyed, fair-bearded Teuton, who had married his only daughter and heiress. He prudently

concluded to sell. Lyne and the Melton property were accordingly, "on a future day, of which," etc., put up to auction by, I think, Messrs. Kaye and Butchart.

The Baron used to remind us at the Melbourne Club a good deal of Monsieur le Comte de Florac, in the character of his sentiments and the quality of his English. He was good-natured, effusive, polite, though ready to resent any criticism which he did not interpret as friendly. "Do you think he intended himself to be satirical for me?" he once inquired, with earnestness; "if I thought so, I would challenge him on the instant." The challenge did not come off, and it need hardly be said that no offence was intended to a guest and a foreigner. The day of sale came off, and as we walked up from the Club the Baron requested a friend to bid for him the amount of the reserve price, which had been fixed, I think, at £6 or £5 : 15s. per head. The run was, if anything, overstocked. As a number of stores had been recently put on, it was thought a fair price. Whatever it was, owing to a misconception, he went £500 higher than he had been instructed to do. The bidding was not very brisk towards the end, the sale trembled on the balance for a minute or two, then the purchaser came forward and made a further advance. The station was knocked down to him. The Baron rushed up to his friend and shook his hand enthusiastically; "You have made for me £500," he said, "but I did hold my breath till the next offaire arrive." Mr. Nowlan, as well as the captain, his heirs and assigns, must have realised handsomely from the

proceeds of Lyne. Purchased for less than £4000, it fetched nearly £20,000, not reckoning intervening profits and the Melton freehold. It afforded one more illustration of the strangely-assorted luck which apparently besets colonial investments, the occasional success of outsiders, not less than the hard measure too often dealt out to pioneers.

I am not aware whether the last purchaser of Lyne found the scale of profits perennial. I doubt it, inasmuch as Duffy's Act followed, bringing darker days for the squatter. Fortune did not favour the original owners either. Cheery and full of pluck to the last, George Elms sailed for Fiji, as after an interval did his old comrade Lang—pleasant, ever-courteous "Allan-a-Dale." It was the fashionable "rush" for a while. They lie at rest under the whispering palm. Perhaps, ere the last slumber, the murmur of the surges had lulled to sleep all bitter memories of the wild southland in which their early manhood was passed.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ROMANCE OF A FREEHOLD

IN a recent advertisement in the *Australasian* I observed public notice to be given that "the rich agricultural lands of the Kangatong estate, near Port Fairy, would be subdivided at an early date, and sold in farms to suit purchasers." What changes time doth bring! When I first saw the ground referred to, then known as "Cox's Heifer Station," how could one divine the transformation it was fated to undergo? As little in 1844 was prevision possible of the separate sale notices in which it would figure as the years rolled on. It epitomises the history of the district, perhaps of the colony.

First of all, "that well-known fattening station known as Kangatong, with choice herd of cattle, stock-horses given in," etc. Then, "that fully improved, fenced, and subdivided sheep property, of which the wool is so favourably known to Melbourne buyers." Again, "that valuable pastoral estate of Kangatong, comprising 35,000 (let us say) acres of freehold"; and now, lastly, "those

rich agricultural lands, divided into farms to suit purchasers."

All these progressive wonders were to be evolved from the lone primeval waste upon which a solitary horseman then gazed in the autumn of 1844. And the wand of the squatter-sorcerer was to do it all. I might then have seen lakelets glittering in the sun, orchards and cornfields, barns and stables, mansion and offices, a village in itself, the spacious wool-shed and the scientific wash-pen, had I possessed the prophetic eye. But Fate held her secrets closely then as now. Only the vast eucalyptus forest, stretching unbroken to the horizon, waved its sombre banners before me. Only the scarce-trodden meadows of the waste lay unfed, untouched around me. I beheld a pastoral paradise without so much as a first inhabitant, and at which the very beasts of the field had hardly arrived. It was a spectacle sufficiently solemn to have awed a democrat, to have imbued even the Arch-Anti——, well, Anti-Capitalist, with some respectful consideration for pioneers, whether in toil or triumph. How I appeared on the scene at this particular juncture came about in this wise.

When I first arrived in Port Fairy, the "Heifer Station" was what would be called in mining parlance "an abandoned claim," and possibly "jumpable," to use another effective expression with which the gold-fields have enriched the Australian vernacular. Mr. John Cox of Werrongourt had reconsidered his first intention of segregating the immature females of his herd—probably as too expensive—had withdrawn them and their herdsmen, leaving hut and

yards untenanted, the run unoccupied. This last was now for sale with "improvements." I really can't recall the date of that comprehensive euphemism, which included everything, from a watch-box to a wool-shed, from a brush-yard to a family mansion. Perhaps about the time when the children of married servants advertised for were feelingly referred to as "encumbrances."

However, improvements and encumbrances notwithstanding, we must get on with our "Heifer Station" history. Here it was for sale, with one hut, one log-yard, and the right to 40,000 acres, more or less, of first-class pasture — for how much? Would I could get the offer again! *Thirty pounds!* This was the price—everybody knew it. Mr. Cox wanted to sell—had plenty of country at Werrongourt — couldn't be bothered with it. The best thing I could do was to go and see it, or close for it at once. Mr. Cox was in Tasmania just at present, but had, of course, left instructions. Thus far the friendly public. I thought I would go and see. So I mounted Clifton, the grandson of Skeleton, and turned my face to the setting sun. Making my way to Tarrone, where at that time Mr. Chamberlain lived, I explained to him the object of my tourist wandering. I was most hospitably received. It turned out afterwards that he had had a hint that I wanted to "sit down" somewhere in his neighbourhood. The runs at that time were, as may be imagined, very sparsely stocked. If the Commissioner of Crown Lands was in a bad temper, he had the power to "give away" to the interloper a seriously appreciable portion of any pastoral ar

however long established and secure the occupant might fancy himself to be.

So, as he afterwards told one of the neighbours, he determined to show me every courtesy; after which, appealing to all chivalrous feelings in my nature, he felt that I could not, in common decency, annex any portion of his (Mr. Chamberlain's) run. This was a shade of diplomacy sometimes roughly described as characteristic of "the old soldier." If so, my host's military experiences, as on another historical occasion, served him well. When I left Tarrone that morning, with a guide, towards the Heifer Station, I would have driven on to Western Australia—a pastoral Vanderdecken—rather than infringe on the tolerably liberal boundaries which he claimed for Tarrone.

I rode along and passed the great Tarrone Marsh, with its well-defined wooded banks and its miles upon miles of mournful reeds, wild-duck and bittern haunted. My guide pointed out to me a place where, riding one day a mare that he described as "touchy," by the edge of the marsh, suddenly a blackfellow jumped out from behind a tree—"a salvage man accoutred proper." The touchy mare gave so sudden a prop, accompanied by a desperate plunge, that he was thrown almost at the feet of the "Injun." Others appeared—like Roderick Dhu's clansmen—from every bush and "stony rise," which had till this moment sheltered them. He raised himself doubtfully, much expectant of evil; relations had certainly been strained of late between the races. However, they did not (apparently) kill him, he being there to relate the story. I forget what trifle prevented them.

Then he proceeded to sketch the "lay of the country." Told me (of course) that "I couldn't miss the place if I followed the swamp round for two or three miles, then made for the east a bit, till I came to some thickish country, then to look out for a ti-tree crick as would lead down to the main crick. I'd cut the tracks where they had been tailing the heifers. Then I'd see the hut and yard." He then went on his way, having "to run in a beast to kill," and I saw him no more. No track, no road, no bridle-path was there, no known thoroughfare; while, after you left the great Tarrone Marsh, there was not a landmark to speak of within twenty miles, not a bit of open country the size of a corn-patch. A long, solitary, unsatisfactory day lay before me. Sometimes I was pretty sure I was on the "run"; at other times I was confident that I was off it. I found the creek a minute but permanent-looking rivulet, with occasional water-holes. The hut and yards were on this watercourse; both inexpensive structures. I saw, however, that the whole country-side was covered with a sward of kangaroo grass two or three feet high, and as thick as a field of barley. No doubt it was good fattening country, but I did not take to it somehow. It was a "blind" place, in stock-riders' phrase—no open country, no contrasts, no romance about it in fact. "*Toujours* gum-tree," as Sir Edward Deas Thomson said when he drove Sir Charles Fitzroy and Colonel Mundy—somewhere about that time—with a four-in-hand drag to Coombing, near Carcoar. I didn't fancy it altogether, good though the grass undoubtedly was. I managed to make my way back to Tarrone that

night, where I recruited after the toils of the day. I informed my gallant and politic host that I thought I should go farther west. We parted on the morrow—to his relief, doubtless—with feelings of high mutual consideration.

Years afterwards we had many a laugh about the fright I gave him; and when I was safely settled at Squattlesea Mere, less than twenty miles to the westward, I nearly concluded an agreement with him to rent Tarrone for five years, with the option of purchase, while he went to England. This was a year or two before the gold. The rental asked for run, herd (the same numbers, ages, and sexes to be returned), and homestead was calculated upon the fat cattle prices of the period—£2 : 10s. for cows, £3 for fat bullocks; so was the purchase money. I often thought how awfully sold my friend and neighbour would have been, as a shrewd man of business, not wholly unmindful of the main chance, had I closed with his offer. I finally declined it on the ground of the run being fully stocked up—our *bête noir* in those deliciously simple days, when we thought it took ten acres, more or less, to fatten a bullock.

But though it was not considered good form to settle down too close to a man's horse paddock, it would never have done to have taken the first occupier's word for what was his lawful right of run. By his own account there was never any permanent water "out back." All the decent land within twenty miles was his; the best thing the intending pastoralist could do was to go clean ou[illegible] district. Had the Dunmore people liste[illegible]v to Mr.

Hunter of Eumeralla, they would never have taken up Dunmore, which, in the future, turned out a more valuable property than Eumeralla.

Nor would the Messrs. Aplin have got St. Kitts, the runs of Yambuk and Tarrone being popularly supposed to absorb all the available country between their boundaries. Mr. Lemann, however, managed to insert himself and his belongings, wedge-fashion, between Tarrone and Kangatong, on the border of the Tarrone Marsh. Though small of stature, and not stalwart, he held his own, and fattened a decent average of his herd of 1000 or 1200 head annually until he sold out to Mr. Smith. Mr. Lemann had formerly been a kind of neighbour of ours, having fed his herd previously in the vicinity of a creek running into the Upper Yarra, near a flat which, if I mistake not, is known as "Lemann's Swamp" to this day.

He was a well-informed man, who took a great interest in liberal politics. I well recollect his being filled with righteous wrath at the high-handed act of Rajah Brooke in making a clean sweep of a fleet of pirates. I said then, and have since been confirmed in my opinion, that the gallant ruler of Sarawak knew his business better than his Exeter Hall critics.

Mr. Lemann had for working overseer and general stand-between him and personal exertion a country Englishman named Tom Cook, who with his wife managed everything that his stock-rider Hugh was not responsible for. I took some interest in the family, as we had hired Thomas aforesaid from the emigrant vessel as ploughman, and he had been in our service in that capacity at Heidelberg. From

the fair-haired, fresh-coloured English farm labourer that he was then, I watched his development through various stages of colonial experience—into dairyman, knock-about-man, bullock-driver, and finally stock-rider at Kangatong. I rather think he had his smock-frock when he came to us, with English rustic tongue and gait. When I afterwards saw him at Mr. Smith's muster (I had sold Mr. Gibb, the dealer, who was lifting the fat cattle there, an additional drove, just started for Melbourne, at £8 all round, cash) he was quite the stock-rider of the period, with neat boots and seat to match, a sharp eye for calves, and, alas! a colonially-acquired taste for grog, and a fight afterwards, if possible.

However, such were only occasional recreations, between which he was a first-rate worker and most worthy fellow. He and his good wife reared a family of Australian-born East Saxons; his eldest son—a tall fellow with a team of his own, grown a carrier—took away the first load of wool I ever sent from Squattlesea Mere, in 1862 or thereabouts.

Among other things in which Cook showed his power of adaptation was the building of a stone cottage and dairy for Mr. Lemann. The country being of volcanic formation, stone to any amount was on hand, and he principally built the walls, nearly two feet in thickness, of a very snug bachelor establishment—a vast improvement, both in summer and winter, upon the ordinary slab architecture.

After deciding not to buy Mr. Cox's heifer station, I happened to be staying at Gra [illegible] hen I met, one evening, two strange gentle [illegible] r two from the place, coming along [illegible] n as

to their steeds. These were my worthy friends James Dawson, now of Camperdown, and his friend and partner Mr. Selby. They, like Mr. Lemann, had been trying to make cattle pay on the Upper Yarra ranges—had, like him, concluded to start for the west country, then reported to be the best grass going, and not all taken up. They speedily heard of Mr. Cox having a station for sale, and he soon after returning from Tasmania, Mr. Dawson closed with him for the £30 or thereabouts. Messrs. Dawson and Selby shortly afterwards brought up their cattle, and, with their belongings, occupied the run. I always suspected Mr. Dawson, who was philologically inclined, to have extracted the name Kangatong from the aborigines subsequently, and christened the run after his arrival. It was among the things not generally known before his advent. Gradually and judiciously, as time passed on, Kangatong was improved, and so successfully managed that it took rank as one of the best paying stations in the district. Mr. Dawson and his family showed exceptional kindness towards the blacks who lived near them. Kangatong was just outside of the "tauri," or hereditary district of "the Children of the Rocks," or matters might not have continued so pacific, my old friend being of a temper singularly intolerant of injustice. But his tribelet had long mingled with the whalers of the Port, from which they were distant less than twenty miles. I doubt Port Fairy Campbell and his merry men had "civilised" them previously—*i.e.* shot a few of the more troublesome individuals. However, Mr. Dawson succeeded in making a valuable collection of data, from which

he was enabled to publish his late work upon the manners, language, and religious customs of certain Australian aboriginals, which has received favourable mention from the *Saturday* and other leading reviews.

CHAPTER XVII

LE CHEVALIER BAYARD

IT was in a year "before the gold" that I had occasion to ride to Kalangadoo, across the Adelaide border near Mount Gambier. Kalangadoo was a cattle station, then the property of the Messrs. Hunter, Alick, Jemmy, and Frank, who then dwelt there, and led the half-laborious, half-romantic life which to the cattle-station holder of the day was allotted. The "Mount Gambier mob," as in colonial parlance described, was at that time composed of men the majority of whom had attained to social distinction. Not far off, at Compton, lived Evelyn Sturt, to my eyes the veritable *fine fleur* of the squatter type. In that year, let us say about 1850, he was a very grand-looking fellow—aristocratic, athletic, adventurous; an explorer, a pioneer, a *preux chevalier* in every sense of the word, a leading colonist, with a strong dash of Bayard about him; popular with the men of his set, and, it is unnecessary to say, a general favourite with the women.

He had the features, the bold autocratic regard

with which the early romance-writers were wont to depict the Norman Baron, whose part I make no doubt he would have acted creditably had Fate but arranged his existence synchronically.

The prejudices of the day being against a younger son's procuring a competence after the simple and masterful plan of his ancestors, he was constrained to betake himself with his brethren and kinsfolk to far countries and unknown seas. And right manfully had he, and they, of whom more than one name shines brightly on the pages of modern history, dared the perils of sea and shore, of waste and wilderness.

He had been an explorer, was now a pioneer squatter drawing nearer and yet nearer to the goal of fortune. He had been rich, he had been poor, had driven his own bullocks, and been hardly pressed at times. But whatever the occupation or garb in which he elected to masquerade temporarily, no one ever looked upon Evelyn Sturt without its being strongly borne in upon his mind that he saw a gentleman of high degree.

I admired him with a boy's natural feeling of hero-worship. All that I saw and heard of him heightened the idea. Not less stalwart than refined,

> But in close fight a champion grim,
> In camps a leader sage.

The hero besides of numerous local legends. He had leaped from a bridge into a flooded river and rescued a drowning man. He had offered to suck the poison from the wound of a snake-bitten stock-rider. He had quelled the boldest bushman in a shearing row.

He was chief magistrate, universal referee, good at all arms, gallant and gay. The modern exemplar of the good knight and true.

Willie Mitchell was a different type—a more recent importation—tall, slight, delicate in frame and constitution—cultured and artistic; he was the nearest approach to the languid swell that in that robust and natural-mannered epoch we had encountered. He had been enticed to Australia by one of the Hunters, who, it appeared to us bush-abiding colonists, were always going "home." They had very properly pointed out to him that he could obtain a high interest for his money by investing it in stock, living like a gentleman the while—a point upon which he was decided. He had recently purchased a small but rich cattle run in the Mount Gambier district, where the water was subterranean, and the cattle had to be supplied by troughs.

He afterwards sold this and purchased Langa-willi from Wright and Montgomery, who never did a bit of good after they sold it, the most perfect place and homestead in the West. But this by the way.

Why Langa-willi will always be a point of interest in my memory, apart from other reasons, was that Henry Kingsley lived there the chief part of a year as a guest of Mitchell's. It was at Langa-willi that *Geoffrey Hamlyn*, that immortal work, the best Australian novel, and for long the only one, was written. In the well-appointed sitting-room of that most comfortable cottage one can imagine the gifted but somewhat ill-fated author sitting down comfortably after breakfast to his "copy," when his host

had ridden forth with the overseer to make believe to inspect the flocks, but in reality to get an appetite for lunch.

I like to think of them spending the evening sociably in their own way, both rather silent men — Kingsley writing till he had covered the regulation number of sheets—or finished the chapter, perhaps, where the bushrangers came to Garoopna; Mitchell, reading steadily, or writing up his home correspondence; the old housekeeper coming in with the glasses at ten o'clock, then a tumbler of toddy, a smoke in the verandah, or over the fire if in winter, and so to bed. Peaceful, unexciting days and nights, good for Mitchell, who was not over-strong, and for his talented guest. I suspect that in England, where both abode in later years, they often looked back with regret to the peerless climate, the calm days, the restful evenings, spent so far beyond the southern main at Langa-willi. The surroundings were judiciously utilised by the author as furnishing that flavour of verisimilitude which added so much to the charm of his fiction. Baroona, where the Buckleys lived, is the name of a property not far from Mount Hesse, and Widderin, the name of Sam Buckley's famous horse, is also that of a hill visible from the plains of Skipton.

Mr. Mitchell, I may mention, was one of those investors who apparently have only to buy a place to make money out of it. He did so at the Mount Gambier station, knowing no more of cattle and their ways, when he bought it, than of the habits of the alpaca. He then bought Langa-
20,000 sheep or so, having the sa

ignorance of their tastes and management; held it till after the gold; never did any work himself; spent a fair portion of his time at the Melbourne Club. Finally sold out at a handsome profit with a large stock of sheep, and departed to England, never to return.

This looks like luck. Doubtless there was an infusion of that most agreeable ingredient. But I have no doubt either that the mild and elegant William possessed a reasonable share of prudence, about which, like his other endowments and accomplishments, he said nothing. His first introduction to our Port Fairy community was at race time, when he appeared with the Hunters and Sturt, riding a beautiful little blood mare called Medora, a safe and easy mount, his long legs curiously near the ground. There couldn't be, however, a nicer fellow, and Australia will ever owe him a debt of gratitude for extending the hand of generous and delicate hospitality to the artist who first worthily illustrated her free forest life, her adventurous sons and daughters fair.

Charles Mackinnon, erst of Skye—old Charles as he may possibly now be called, alas! and may not the insidious adjective be applied to others of his contemporaries?—dwelt hard by with Mr. Watson, his partner. He yet lives in my memory as the kindest of men. "Kind as a woman" exactly describes his disposition as exemplified in my case. There were no women, by the way, thereabouts in those days, except black ones, who used to fetch in the horses on foot, carry water, and otherwise make themselves useful.

While at Kalangadoo I was suddenly knocked over by a feverish attack—an exceptional case with me—then, as now, tolerably tough; but an hour or two of that kind of thing takes the conceit out of the best of us. Shivering and burning by turns, with throbbing headache and nausea, I had to lie down to it, and was very bad all one night. Charles Mackinnon watched over me in the most patient manner the while. We were new acquaintances, too. I remember distinctly his appearance next morning with a bowl of beef-tea, with which I broke a twenty-four hours' fast.

Finding that I anxiously desired to become possessed of a black boy, he procured me a small imp, so young and callow that he fell off the quiet old horse (which Mackinnon also lent me for him to ride home on), and, sprawling in the midst of the dust, cried piteously. Poor Charlie Gambier! as I named him—he had the honour of being christened by his lordship the late Bishop Perry of Melbourne. He was also taught, with great pains and perseverance, his catechism. He could read his Bible well. He turned out much the sort of Christian that might have been expected, deteriorating rapidly after the age of fifteen, and learning to drink spirits and copy the undesirable white man with painful accuracy.

John Meredith, a scion of a well-known Tasmanian family, was another resident within hail of the Mount. A stalwart Australian in good sooth, 6 feet 4 [illegible] or thereabouts, in his stocking-soles; blue-ey[illegible] bearded, and about twice as tall as any [illegible] Cambrian, I should say, in the somewhat "[illegible]

country whence his ancestors came. I had made his acquaintance by riding from Melbourne with him a year or so before. Having just come over from Tasmania with a faithful retainer and four horses, thence imported, he was journeying to a run which he had bought.

He rode an immense black horse, which carried him "like a pony," fifteen stone and over as his weight probably then was! I well remember speculating as to how such a horse might be bred—a grand forehand, clean flat legs, active, powerful, blood-like, a great jumper, and a good carriage horse.

Let any one try to pick up an animal of this type, no matter what price he is prepared to give. He will then realise the correctness of my conviction then, wholly unaltered by after-experience, of his rarity and value.

The faithful retainer, whose name was William Godbold, was a grim-looking "old hand," who had, however, risked his life in a memorable flood in order to save a comrade.

Years after the faithful retainer came to work on my station, and being looked upon as "such a good man," was permitted to purchase a colt on credit. He availed himself of the credit (and the colt) by riding him across the border to Mount Gambier. There was no extradition treaty in those days. A fawn bay, with a black stripe down his back, a shoulder cross and mule markings (see Darwin), four years old, fast and sound—I never was paid for that colt, and "still the memory rankles," trifling as is the deficit! Many debts have I forgiven. Some, alas! have had to be forgiven to me. But that colt—

"Chilleno" by name, own brother to my best hack "The Gaucha"—I can't forgive that one.

On my way out and back—it was some four or five days' ride—I stayed at various stations. It was *de règle* in those days, and I don't know a pleasanter ending to a day's ride than meeting a hospitable squatter in his own house. You have had just work enough to tire you reasonably, to make you enjoy a cheerful meal, some fresh unstudied talk (people are twice as confidential in the bush, even with strangers, as they are in town), a smoke in the verandah, and the sound, peaceful sleep that follows all. Then the awakening in the lovely fresh bush air, winter or summer, the feeling is ennobling, invigorating. As he fills his lungs and expands his breast therewith the wayfarer feels a better and wiser man. Old Mr. Robertson, a Scottish settler, had a lovely station on the Wannon. To his homestead travellers chiefly gravitated for reasons which he summarised somewhat plainly on one occasion.

"Don't think I believe you come to see old Robertson," he said. "In the summer it's the fruit that fetches you, and in the winter Mary's jam." Now, Miss Robertson's preserves and conserves were the admiration of the whole district, while the orchard in the season was a marvel for fruit of every kind and sort.

I wish I could show those good people and certain conceited gardeners who persist in pruning and cutting every lower limb of their fruit trees, the orchard at Wando Vale, as in those days. Great umbrageous apple trees with long lateral branches trailing on the ground, covered with fruit of the *finest size* and *quality*

The remarkable thing about these apple trees was that they had never been grafted or pruned. They all came from the seed of a barrel of decayed apples, and which, being of many different varieties, were, as the old gentleman expressed it, "each better than the other." That such is not the general result I am aware, being a bit of a gardener myself, but it was the fact in this instance, as I saw and tasted the fruit, and have the word of the owner for it besides, who planted the trees with his own hands.

Mr. Alfred Arden I remember visiting at Hilgay, as also the late John Coldham of Grassdale. What a lovely bit of country his was! And is not all the Wannon the "pick of creation"—Colac, perhaps, excepted? Low deep-swarded hills, rolling downs, and thickly-timbered slopes, all wheat land, and forty bushels to the acre at that. Too good for this wicked world almost! The men who took it up first had hardly sufficient inducement to exert themselves. There is such a thing as being too well off. I am aware it is not good for me, above all men, but I should like to have a try at bearing it again, and risk

His dangerous wealth
With all the woes it brings.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CHRISTENING OF HEIDELBERG

WHEN we came to Melbourne in 1840 we might have bought all the land between Prince's Bridge and Upper Toorak for the merest trifle above "upset price." As to Sandridge, St. Kilda, and Brighton, they might almost have been "taken up," so low was the estimate of their value by the colonists of the period. Mr. Dendy did pre-empt 5000 acres hard by the city, at Brighton, under the special survey regulations which then obtained, at £1 per acre. We certainly secured a trifle of seventy acres, upon which the viceregal residence of Toorak was afterwards erected. But some frivolous objection to the agricultural properties of the soil weighed with the head of the family, who, after a few unimportant purchases of town allotments—such as two acres in Flinders Street running back to the lane so named and adjoining Degraves' buildings, a half-acre near to the corner of Collins and Elizabeth Streets, another in Bourke Street, besides a dozen more in various parts of Melbourne—finally decided to build and permanently reside at Heidelberg.

This romantically-named suburb was seven miles from Melbourne, with an unmade road through black soil of considerable richness, and a tenacity, when resolved into mud, which I have, during much after-experience, rarely seen equalled. It might have appeared to some persons a matter of supererogation this planting one's self so many miles away from an infant settlement, such as Melbourne then was. A matter involving loss of time, too, expense in transit, besides exile from whatever society was then available. But these considerations availed not against the charming prospect of a rural home, a country-house surrounded by an estate of fertile land, bordered by the clear-flowing Yarra, and glorified by a distant prospect of the Australian Alps. But chiefly alluring were the persuasive tongue, the sanguine predictions, and the enjoyable *al fresco* entertainments of Mr. R. H. Brown, a social celebrity of the day, fashionable and distinguished, generally known, from his reminiscent enthusiasm on the subject of the grand European tour, as Continental Brown.

This sentimental speculator, most refined of land agents, had, either personally or as deputy for a firm of Sydney capitalists, purchased a block of land extending nearly from the Darebin Creek to the village, and comprising the estates of Chelsworth, Waverley, Hartlands, and Leighton. There was also a section named Maltravers. I am not sure, indeed, whether he did not christen the whole block "Maltravers," in compliment to the Master upon whose melancholy, philosophical, resistless hero so many of [illegible] of the day fashioned themselves.

Slight, vivacious, *soigné* in dress and courteous of manner, a good business man (was he not a bank director in his leisure moments, that is, when he was not giving dinners and *déjeuners*, getting up picnics, improvising balls and generally *faisant l'agréable* all round?), he managed to "place" Heidelberg at a considerable advance upon the original purchase money.

I can see him now in the centre of a group of admiring friends, chiefly of the fair sex, standing on one of the heights which overlooked the meadows of the Yarra. "There, my dear madam, permit me to direct your gaze. Do you not observe the silver thread of the river winding through that exquisite green valley? It reminds me so vividly of the gliding Neckar, and, alas! (here a most telling sigh) of scenes, of friends, loved and lost. I can fancy that I look at my ever-remembered, ever-regretted Heidelberg! Those slopes rising from the farther river-shore will be terraced vineyards; and there, where you can faintly discern the snow pinnacle on yon spur of the Australian Alps, I can imagine the grand outline of the Hartz Mountains. It is, it shall be, Heidelberg! Charles, open more champagne. We must christen this thrice-favoured spot, on this trebly-auspicious day, worthily, irrevocably!"

In some such fashion Heidelberg was named, and, what was more to the purpose, sold. It is undeniably strong as to scenery, superior as to soil; it has water privileges; but seeing that all this happened a trifle over forty years agone, it may strike the original investors who still hold a pro-

portion of the ground, that they might have laid out their cash to greater advantage, and that they have waited a good while for that advance in prices which will recoup everything.

Heidelberg, thus sponsored, took rank as a fashionable suburb, and divers personages, according to an inevitable natural law, were attracted thereto. Captain George Brunswick Smyth, formerly of her Majesty's 50th Regiment, purchased Chelsworth. Mr. David M'Arthur came next to him. Then Waverley and Hartlands, the Rev. John Bolden, Mr. Hawdon at Banyule, and later on Dr. Martin, beyond him again.

Still more distant, on the Rosanna estate, dwelt no less a potentate than Mr. Justice Willis, the Supreme Court Rhadamanthus of the day, who must have expended considerably more than half his time in driving in his carriage and pair into Melbourne and back along the miry, almost impassable track into which the winter rains invariably converted the road.

This not undistinguished legal celebrity we had known in Sydney, and he presented himself to my youthful intelligence as a good-natured, mild-mannered old gentleman, with whom I used to go quail and duck shooting in the meadows bordering the Yarra on Mr. Hawdon's and neighbouring estates. On these occasions the late Mr. Archibald Thom, who rented part of Banyule from Mr. Hawdon, often accompanied us. And a very deadly shot he was.

The Judge shot fairly well, and after a decent morning's sport was genial and gracious in a marked degree. But when he doffed the russet tweeds and

donned the ermine, he became utterly transformed. It was averred, too, altogether for the worse. His impatience of contradiction, his acerbity of manner, and his infirmity of temper, were painful to witness, and dangerous to encounter. They landed him in contentions with all sorts and conditions of men, and ultimately led to his suspension by the Governor-General, a rare and exceptional proceeding.

I quote here verbatim from my journal, of date Wednesday, 3rd August 1841 :—

> Nothing particular happened on the farm to-day, but the whole of Melbourne was in a commotion about His Honour Judge Willis. It appears that His Honour having said that he would commit anybody who offered to serve the order upon him to go to Sydney, signed by the three judges there resident, as being illegal, was met by Messrs. Carrington and Ebden, who tendered the order to him, and, upon his refusing to take it, *actually threw it at him*, upon which he immediately committed them to gaol. There was a great crowd, many of whom supported the Judge, but others the prisoners. Some gentlemen, however, were present and saw the insult offered.

On the following day's page I find further allusion to this "high-toned" episode in Melbourne's early life.

> THURSDAY, *4th August* 1841.
>
> The gentlemen who insulted the Judge yesterday were brought up before the Magistrates in order that they might be committed to take their trial. However, strange to say, in spite of the evidence of four or five respectable persons who swore to the outrage, the worthy gentlemen were acquitted. There were, however, upon the Bench several personal enemies of the Judge. Many persons are of opinion that the decision is infamous.

It will be seen that we then distinctly sided with His Irascibility, and would doubtless have been a

vigorous partisan against the "personal enemies" had we written for the press of the period. However, in spite of our sympathies, and those of other well-meaning friends, His Honour Mr. Justice Willis was compelled to go to Sydney, thence to England. It was understood that he there gained a technical victory, but had a hint to resign.

Mr. Thomas Wills owned "Lucerne," close by Alphington, the village on the Darebin Creek since called into being and so named. He had a fancy for the great fodder plant, and was the first proprietor in the neighbourhood to lay down any considerable breadth of land with it. From it, or as a *souvenir* of the world-renowned lake, the estate was named.

I don't know that the Heidelberg proprietors could be called a fortunate community. Something of the nature of disaster happened to all of them. Possibly in the course of three or four decades an average of misfortune occurs in most families. But our district was exceptional. The wreck of the *London* brought mourning and lifelong grief into one family. Cheery, kindly Joe Hawdon, the pioneer, the explorer, the jolly squire of Banyule, died when scarce over middle age. The Bolden family lost two sons who had arrived at man's estate—one killed by a fall from his horse; one, a young officer rising in the service, by a tiger in India. Our house, endeared by many memories, was burned by an incendiary, still undiscovered. A tree fell on our good friend and neighbour, Mr. M'Arthur, and *very* nearly crushed the life out of him. Captain Smyth died young, and Lucerne has

long been untenanted by any representative of the Wills family.

Some of these fine days, they tell me, there will be a railway to Heidelberg. Then the slopes will be cut up into building sites, the river meadows irrigated, or turned into market gardens and creameries. The Australian Alps will be more visible to the naked eye than ever. Some squatter from Riverina or Queensland, who has just disposed of his stations for half-a-million to a syndicate, will build an imitation of the historic Castle, with the Great Tun, to be filled with White Yering. Dances of vignerons or happy peasants will be frequent; and Mr. R. H. Brown, if still in the flesh, may see his prophetic vision so nearly fulfilled that it will hardly be worth his while to return to a continental Elysium. But, sentiment apart, there was a flavour of real country life about the district, protected as it was from intrusion on the east and north-east by the deep unforded river, in which more than one death took place from drowning. Heidelberg, apparently, always had attractions for men whose sympathies lay in the direction of stud farms and the improvement of stock. Chelsworth then, as later on, was the home of pedigree shorthorns, Captain Brunswick Smyth having imported cows of very blue blood, which passed into Mr. Bolden's possession, and were incorporated with the Grasmere herd. Mahomet, Young Mussulman, Lady Vane and her daughter were located at Leighton; whilst "Snoozer" by "Muley Moloch," and [illegible] of [illegible]gh lineage, abode hard by. [illegible] devoted admirer of Bulwer [illegible]ed the landscape. Heidel-

berg was undeniably picturesque, and had climatic advantages. It was cooler than the sand-dunes of Brighton and St. Kilda, than the low hills of Toorak, than the river meadow upon which Melbourne proper then chiefly stood. Waves of mountain air were wafted from the Alps, on which, though many miles distant, the snow was clearly visible. Those of us who, in after years, were members of the old Melbourne Club in Lower Collins Street, often preferred a longish night ride for the immunity from mosquitoes which Heidelberg then afforded.

The river meadows by the Yarra were composed of a deep, black, fertile loam, eminently suited for orchards, cereals, and root crops. Taking into consideration the quality of the soil, the proximity of the river, the variety of the landscape, no suburb would have equalled Heidelberg in attractiveness had it not been handicapped by distance from the metropolis. Rail, road traffic, and settlement—all appeared to have gone north, south, west; anywhere but towards Heidelberg.

Now that every foot of building land near Melbourne has been bought and built upon—has become "terraced slopes," in the evil sense of modern overcrowding, perhaps the beneficent Heidelberg and Alphington Railway will open up the untouched glades which still silently overlook the murmuring river, still lie hushed to sleep in the shadow of the great Australian mountain chain.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WOODLANDS STEEPLECHASE

> Oh! the merry days,
> The merry days, when we were young!

SANG the ladye fayre. I can hear the clear rich tones even now. Ah me! what days were those! Why will they not come back? We are scarcely of such hoar antiquity that we may not enjoy the present reasonably, when "gracieuses" dames and demoiselles look brightly on us with those haunting eyes of theirs. But, oh! the awakening at dawn, that is when we find the difference. How glorious was it to regain consciousness from out a realm of poet dreams, with the certainty of a day of stirring world-strife before us. At the *réveille* of that enchanted time, how gaily the knight donned harness and mounted steed, serenely conscious of his ability to perform his devoir "right manful under shield," confident of winning his guerdon, even, perchance, a smile from the Queen of Beauty herself.

Now, alas, the sky seems lowering and [illegible] coloured, the lines of the foe ever serried and [illegible]

ranked, the blows come shrewder and more difficult of parry. More than once has the knight been, by trusty squire or faithful friend,

> Dragged from amid the horses' feet,
> With dinted shield and helmet beat.

We were ever and anon minded to answer in the affirmative to the "rendez vous!" of Fate so persistently repeated. Yet will we forward still, parrying lance-thrust here, fending sword-play there. Many a trusty comrade is down; we miss the cheery tones of a voice that sounded never far from our right arm, in feast or in foray. Yet still *en avant* seems more natural than halt or retreat.

Ye gods! what a spring morning was that on which we hurled ourselves out of bed at Woodlands, with the full, absorbing, wildly-exciting knowledge, even in that first moment of consciousness, that *The Steeplechase* was to be run that day—an Olympic game in which we were to share. A truly classic conflict in which the competitors were mostly men of mark, where the spectators were friends, relatives, and sympathisers, and where divine personages in the shape of various ladies of the period, lovely and beloved, were to gaze upon our prowess, thrill at our daring, and "weep when a warrior nobly falls."

We had a warrior, Colonel Acland Anderson—poor fellow; we had four squatters, Molesworth and Rawdon Greene, Edmund M'Neill, and "the duffer who writes this" reminiscence. Last, not least, we had a Chief-Justice *in posse*. He wasn't Sir William in those days, only a hard-riding, h working, manifestly rising barrister, perhaps not in

described by a maid-servant from the Emerald Isle, at a house where he had called, and who, in the fluster of the interview, had forgotten his name, as "a mighty plisant young man with foxy whiskers."

We were a goodly company, all staying at Woodlands for a week or two—have people leisure and inclination to do this sort of thing now?—and this steeplechase had been improvised to take place on the plain before Woodlands House, as an acceptable variation of the ordinary programme, which comprised other entertainments besides the orthodox dance which ended the day. Was there not also another legal celebrity not as yet graced with the accolade? Cheery, cultured, courteous Redmond Barry—did he not write a charade duly enacted by us youths and maidens, besides coaching us in "The Chough and Crow" and divers glees and part-songs?

In that Arcadian period what a nice place Woodlands was! Somehow one could afford to take life more easily in those days. The sons of the house were sometimes up the country at their stations, especially at shearing time, but managed to be a good deal at the old home. And when they were there the châtelaine wisely took heed to make home a pleasant place; to that end inviting friends and well-wishers, among whom I had the privile[illegible] to be inscribed. Great were the doings done, [illegible] very pleasant the days we spent there.

Thus Woodlands stands before me, lookin[illegible] over those half-forgotten days, as "the country-[illegible] *par excellence* of the period.

Neither a farm nor yet a large estat[illegible] something between the two, while the hou[illegible]

the *ménage* generally were more in accordance with the habitudes of English country-house life than often obtains in Australia.

Mr. Pomeroy Greene, resolving to make Victoria his future home, had emigrated after a comprehensive fashion—not now so common. He brought with him, in addition to his large family, a house, with men-servants and maid-servants, horses and carriages, farm tools and implements, nearly everything which he could have needed had he proceeded to free-select an uninhabited island. Was there not "Rory O'More," a son of "Irish Birdcatcher"; "Nora Creina," dam by "Drone"; the graceful "Taglioni," and the hunter "Pickwick," a big, powerful, Galway-looking nag, up to any weight over any height, and not too refined to draw a cart or do a day's harrowing on a pinch? An exceedingly useful stamp of horse in a new country, most of us will admit, and quite worth his passage money.

Also, in this connection, came Tom Brannigan, an active, resolute, humorous young Irishman, with a decided family likeness to one Mickey Free about him. He was stud groom, and a model retainer during the first years of the settlement of Woodlands. Let me not forget Smith, the butler, a decorous, solemn personage of staid demeanour and faultless accuracy of get-up, an occasional twinkle of the eye only at times betraying that he belonged to the Milesian and not the Saxon branch of his widely-dispersed family and vocation.

Just thirteen miles from Melbourne, Woodlands was a pleasant morning or afternoon's ride—an easy drive. You left Melbourne by the Flemington road, traversed the Moonee Ponds, finally debouch-

ing upon the plain, whence you saw the house, built bungalow fashion upon a wooded slope, with flanking wings and a courtyard, verandah-encircled likewise, facing eastward towards Sunbury, and on the west having an extensive outlook over plain and forest, with the sea in the distance. The landscape was extensive, "wide and wild, and open to the air," but sufficiently wooded to prevent the expression of bleakness. These thoughts possibly do not occur to me as I dress provisionally in shooting coat, slippers, etc., and rush out to the stables to look at the gallant steed that is to carry Cæsar and his fortunes, a game-looking Arab grey, fast and a good fencer, the property of one John Fitzgerald Leslie Foster—a guest at the time, and lent to me for the occasion. Only been a few days off grass, though otherwise in good buckle. The certainty of his being short of condition does not weigh with me, however, so anxious am I to have a throw in and sport my tops and cords. Tom Brannigan thinks "he has a great spring in him entirely," and encourages me to hope that a lucky chance may land me a winner. He relates an anecdote of his brother Jim, a well-known steeplechase jock, in a race where the fences were terrific. One of the country people was heard to say, "Sure the most of them would break their necks, but Jim Brannigan and the ould mare would have a leg to spare, somehow or somehow." Much comforted by this apposite reference, I shut the door, and inspect the rest of the stable. It is not a very small one.

Having a look for the hundredth time at "[illegible] O'More"—a beautiful brown horse, showing [illegible] quality, with a strong likeness to "The Prem[illegible]

more than one of his points, and glancing at a couple of yearlings—I betake myself to an inspection of the battle-steeds of the day.

They are a goodish lot, and in that state and condition of life which impress on me the idea that, unless under the favouring accident of a general *bouleversement*, my chance of winning is slender indeed. First of all stands an elegant blood-looking grey, the property of the heir-apparent, sheeted, hooded, and done up in great style. He is as "fit as a fiddle," and will have on his back an exceedingly cool and determined rider—who, like Mr. Stripes, "will not throw a chance away."

Next to him is a powerful, hunter-looking bay, an animal which would fetch about four hundred guineas in England. Let me describe him—remembering as I do every hair in his skin. I had ridden him more than once, and the reader, if he has been home lately, will note if I have overrated his price. A three-quarter or four-fifths bred horse, bay with black points, save one white hind leg. A light, well-shaped head, a good neck, and shoulders so oblique that it took the length of the snaffle bridle to pay out for rein; flat and clean bone under the knee, deep across the heart, powerful quarter, with muscular thighs and well-bent hocks. He would have been quite in the English fashion of the present day, as he had a shortish pulled tail. Height about fifteen hands three inches, on short legs.

This was "Thur'mpogue," the property of Edmund M'Neill, of the firm of Hall and M'Neill, near Daisy Hill. The portrait is that of a weight-carrier,

doubtless. And so he needed to be, the aforesaid Edmund being of the unusual height of six and a half feet. Though not particularly broad, it will be seen that he could not be a very light man. In another box stands a long, low, blood-like chestnut horse. He winces and lays back his ears after a fashion which indicates temper, as the boy pulls the sheet off at my instigation. The test is a true one. What little he has is proverbially bad, and he has deposited so many riders in unexpected localities by "mount, and stream, and sea," that a less resolute horseman than the Chief would have fought shy of him as an investment. He is in great form, however, and as hard as nails, his close bright golden coat shining like shot satin. I involuntarily give vent to an exclamation, which denotes that my own and other people's chances have receded since interviewing "The Master of the Rolls," for such is the legal luminary I now behold.

Back to bedroom and bath; for by this time dressing has set in seriously all over the house, and the bachelors' apartments, in a separate wing, resound with the careless talk and frequent laughter which are sure to emanate from a number of friends in the golden prime. All sorts of opinions are volunteered about the merits of each other's horses, sarcastic hints as to horsemanship and condition, laughing retorts and confident anticipations, are to be heard on every side, welling out from the bed-chambers and along the corridors, into which, with the exuberance of youth, the inmates, in various stages of apparelling, likewise overflow.

We all met at breakfast, of course. Talk about

suppers! There may be, doubtless, a fair share of enjoyable "causerie," or even serious love-making, at supper, "when wit and wine sparkle instead of the sun"; but for real, honest, hearty enjoyment, when all is sanguine anticipation of excitement or success, with good weather, good spirits, and good company, commend me to a country-house at breakfast time, where the sexes are judiciously mingled, and a hunt, a steeplechase, or a picnic is on the cards. There may be a few things better in this life of ours. If so, I have seldom come across them.

Of course it was then and there arranged who were to drive whom—what traps, carriages, hacks, and so on were to be requisitioned. The organisation even went so far—if my memory serves me—as that every knight should be presented with the colours of some ladye fayre—after humble petition on bended knee—by my halidome!—which he doubtless swore to carry to the front, or nobly fall.

I don't retain a clear account of the preliminaries on the morning of the "Grand National"; but I think we must have made as much fuss and given as much trouble. When, about mid-day, we turned out on the plain below Woodlands House, where the carriages were drawn up and the spectators assembled in expectation of our appearance, the excitement had passed from the stage of tireless energy to that of fervent concentration. Each man wore an aspect of settled, unflinching resolution, such as might have befitted, in an after-time,

Those who ran the tilt that day
With Death, and bore their lives away
From the Balaclava Charge!

Out we came at last, a fairish field to look at, men and horses, though I say it. I should premise that the leaps were composed of two-railed fences, brushed underneath, about fifteen in all, from four feet to four feet six in height, and sufficiently stiff, as the event proved.

On the upper or eastern side of the course, where shade was procurable, were entrenched the carriages and non-combatants, among whom Mr. Redmond Barry, Mr. Leslie Foster, William Anderson, "Count" Ogilby, and other disengaged cavaliers, who did their devoir in entertaining the ladies and judiciously criticising the field. Jimmy Ellis, friend and pastoral partner of one William Stawell, a brisk, black-bearded, hard-riding little Milesian, was starter and clerk of the course. Here we came up for the last time, more or less soberly or skittishly, to the post, with cords and tops, silk jackets and caps, "accoutred proper," full jockey costume being *de rigueur*. A correct card of the race would probably have read as follows. The colours of the riders may have partially faded out of memory's ken, inasmuch as "it was many and many a year ago."

1. Mr. Molesworth Greene's grey horse "Trifle," four years, pink and white—ridden by owner.
2. Mr. Stawell's "Master of the Rolls," aged chestnut, scarlet and black—owner.
3. Mr. E. M'Neill's bay horse "Thur'mpogue," blue and silver—owner.
4. Mr. Acland Anderson's bay horse "Spider," ridden by Mr. Rawdon Greene—crimson and gold.

5. Mr. William Anderson's chestnut horse "Murgah," ridden by Mr. Acland Anderson—maroon jacket, black cap.
6. Mr. Leslie Foster's grey horse "Achmet," ridden by Mr. Rolf Boldrewood—white and magenta.

We are marshalled in line by Jimmy Ellis, and a good start not being so vitally important as in a flat race, we get comfortably away.

Pretty close together we charge the first fence, which is negotiated with "ease to the riders and satisfaction to the lookers-on." The turf is green and firm, and the distance to the next fence rather greater, so we make the pace better, and, as we near it, blood begins to tell.

The brothers Greene are first over, followed by "Thur'mpogue," the rider of the "Master of the Rolls" lying off, and evidently doing a little generalship. In the second division come my grey and William Anderson's chestnut. Both clear the fence well, and pull double, as we try to keep what wind they have, available for the finish.

So we fare on; each fence shows that the race will mainly lie between Molesworth Greene's grey and the chestnut of Mr. Stawell, the latter taking all his fences in stride, and looking as resolute as at the first. Rawdon Greene, Acland Anderson, and M'Neill are riding jealously for second place.

The pace is now as good as we can make it. We are all at the second fence from home. The grey and the chestnut, almost neck and neck, are taking their leaps together, "Trifle" with a slight lead. We are all going our best. It has come to the do-or-die stage, and every man sets his teeth and rides

for his life. We are in full view of the grand stand too. I have been taking a pull at my grey, and manage, by a rush, to send him up into respectable prominence, when Rawdon Greene's horse hits a top-rail a terrible clout, which flies up and disturbs "Thur'mpogue's" sensitive nerves as he measures his distance for the leap. Half looking back, half jumping, he strikes the rail close to the post. It bends, but does not break. The big horse balances for a moment, and then falls, rolling heavily over his rider. "Thur'mpogue" rises in a moment, and makes a bee-line—head up and rein flying—for the nearest road to Daisy Hill—a practice "quite frequent" with him whenever he happens to get loose. His rider does not rise, or indeed move for a few minutes. He has broken a rib, and, like Mr. Tupman, had all the temporary supply of breath knocked out of his body. The rest of the field finish creditably close, Molesworth Greene's grey being beaten on the post by the "Master of the Rolls."

We did not wait there long, every one being anxious about the precise amount of damage sustained by "Emun Mhor," or Long Edmund, as we heard he was called by the tenantry of the estate after his return to Ireland. Knowing that if he did not die on the field, he would naturally be anxious for the safety of such a horse as "Thur'mpogue," and an extremely swell Wilkinson and Kidd saddle, I started off on the track, and was lucky enough to run him down just as he was preparing to cross the Deep Creek. As I led him back I encountered Jimmy Ellis, also running the trail like a black tracker, with
low to the ground that he did not see me

till I was close on top of him. When we returned to the scene of our contest the wounded warrior was being conveyed to the house in Mrs. Anderson's barouche, doubtless receiving an amount of sympathy which fully compensated for the pain and inconvenience of his mishap.

He was not able to join in the dance which delightfully finished up the day's entertainment, or, indeed, to leave his room; but he was an interesting personage thenceforth, with his arm in a sling, and gained prestige and consideration during the remainder of the revels.

The worst of these brief sketches, roughed off at intervals snatched from a busy life when

> Mournful memory sitteth singing
> Of the days that are no more,

is that melancholy reflections will obtrude themselves. How many of one's comrades who made the joy of that pleasant time are no more! Of that same cheery gathering, how many lie low—how small a party should we now make could we meet—how different would be our greetings!

It boots not to grieve. If we don't ride steeplechases, or try conclusions with the half-tamed steed, we still find a warm place in our hearts for a good hack. His Honour Sir William Stawell doesn't do much in the four-in-hand line nowadays, but I hear that he can walk up a mountain yet, and do his share of bush travelling in vacation. Life is but a battlefield at best, and we, the survivors of more than one decisive action, must bow to the merciful fate which has kept us so far unscathed, while in

secret we make moan over those who lie beneath green turf or murmuring wave, desert sand or wild-wood tree; whose place in our hearts, spite of careless speech and smiling brow, may never be filled up.

CHAPTER XX

YERING

WHEN Mr. Lemuel Bolden and I rode to Yering from Heidelberg, about the year 1845, to pay a promised visit to Mr. William Ryrie, the Upper Yarra road and the place of our destination presented a different appearance.

We forded the Yarra below Mr. D. C. M'Arthur's orchard, and crossing a heavily-timbered river-flat, with deep reed-fringed lagoons, debouched on the up-river road. This particular locality was well known to me, inasmuch as, being formerly in our pastoral possession, it had constituted a species of "chase" in my early sporting days. The only denizens of that period were an occasional pair of sawyers, generally "Derwenters," as the Tasmanian expirees were called, thither attracted by the unusual size and straightness of the timber which grew in the flats and "bends" of the winding Yarra.

Owing to the sinuous shape of the lagoons on the south side of the river, coupled with the dense nature of the thickets, it was not an easy matter for a stranger to find his way through the maze. It

naturally came to be, therefore, the happy hunting ground of my boyhood; many a grand day's sport and thrilling adventure did I have therein.

The largest lagoon was fringed with a wide border of reeds, growing in deep water. It had in the centre a clear lakelet or mere, upon the lonely waters of which disported the mountain duck, with his black and other congeners, the greater and lesser grebe; while among the reeds waded or flew the heron (*Ardea australis*), the sultana water-hen, a red-billed variety of the coot, the bittern, the land-rail, and in the season an occasional flock of pied geese or black swans.

To approach the wild-fowl in the open mere was a work of difficulty, if not of danger, inasmuch as the water was too deep for wading, and the entanglement with weeds—which then cost more than one strong swimmer his life—was not out of the reckoning. I did once struggle to the verge of total exhaustion within the green meshes of one of these weed nets, in a lonely pool in which I had to swim for a black duck. The thought uppermost in my mind was that it would be such a time before I should be found, in case of—an accident which didn't come off. I used to circumvent my feathered friends in the horse-shoe lagoon by climbing a tree upon the slope which lay opposite. From this coign of vantage I could see the birds swimming in fancied security, and lay plans accordingly. In order to open fire with effect, I had caused to be conveyed a light canoe, which one of my sawyer friends had neatly scooped out for me, into the outer mere among the reeds. It was in waist-deep water—carefully con-

cealed, and I could, of course, gain it unseen. Paddling or pulling it through the outer reed-brake, I ensconced myself at the edge of the clear water, waiting patiently until the unsuspecting birds sailed past. Once I remember getting two couple of black duck. An occasional goose, or even the lordly swan, found its way into my bag.

Once, as I had planned a day's shooting, I was startled by seeing a flock of ducks wheeling around, and finally making straight for the South Pole, as if decided not to return for a year. Gazing angrily around to discern the cause of this untoward migration, I descried a man carefully got up in correct shooting rig emerge from the reeds. Half-paralysed by the audacity of the unknown—this was years before the free-selection discovery—I sat still in my saddle for one moment. Then, as the enormity of the offence—trespass on our run—rose before me, I dashed spurs into my horse and charged the offender.

"What's your name, and what do you mean by coming here to shoot and frighten the ducks?" I called out, stopping my frantic steed within a few feet of him. "Don't you know whose ground you're on?"

The unknown looked calmly at me with a rather amused countenance (I was about fourteen, and scarcely looked my age), and then said, "Who the devil are you?"

"My name's Boldrewood," I returned, "and this is our run, and no one has any right to come here and shoot or do anything else without my father's."

"Gad! I thought it was the Lord of

at least! You're a smart youngster, but I don't know that there are any game laws in this country. What are you going to do with me for instance?"

The stranger turned out to be a guest at a neighbouring station. There were cattle stations in the vicinity in those days. Anyhow, we compromised matters and finished the day together.

Not far from the spot the late John Hunter Kerr, afterwards of Fernihurst, had a veritable cattle station. I attended one of the musters for a purpose. The cattle were in the yard, with various stockriders and neighbours sitting around, preparatory to drafting, as I rode up, attended by a sable retainer driving a horse and cart.

What did I please to want? "I've come for our black J. B. bullock," said I. "He has been running with your cattle these two years, and I thought he would most likely come in with your muster."

"He is here sure enough, and in fine order, but how are you going to take him home? He always clears the yard when we begin to draft, and no stockrider about here can drive him single-handed."

"I'll take him home fast enough," returned I, with colonial confidence, "if he'll stay in the yard long enough for me to shoot him."

"Oh, that's the idea," quoth Mr. Kerr. "Go to work; only don't miss him or drop any of my cattle."

"No fear."

Old Harvey, an expatriated countryman of Cete- [illegible] wayo's, handed me my single-barrelled fowling-piece, [illegible]ly useful weapon, which had been loaded [illegible] for the occasion. I walked cautiously

through the staring, wildish cattle, to the middle of the yard, where stood the big black bullock. He lowered his head, and began to paw the ground. I made a low bovine murmur, which I had found effective before; he raises his head and looks full at me for a second. The bullet crashes into the forehead "curl," and the huge savage lies prone—a quivering mass. Harvey promptly performs the necessary phlebotomy, and being dragged out of the yard, the black ox is skinned, quartered, and on his way to the beef-cask at Hartlands well within twenty minutes of his downfall.

Years after, when a full-fledged Riverina squatter, Mr. Kerr and I met *in partibus*. He at length recalled my name and *locale*, remarking, "Oh yes! remember now; you were the boy that shot the black bullock in my yard at South Yarra long ago."

Well, Mr. Bolden and I ride along the winding, gravelly bush road, over ranges that skirt and at times leave the course of the river wholly, not seeing a house or a soul, except Mr. Gardiner's dairy farm, for more than twenty miles. The country, in an agricultural and pastoral point of view, is as bad as can be. Thick—*i.e.* scrubby, poor in soil, scanty as to pasture, when all suddenly, as is so often the case in Australia, we come upon a "mountain park."

We cross a running creek by a bridge. We see a flock of sheep and a shepherd, the genuine "old hand" of the period. The slopes are gently rising towards the encircling highlands, the timber is pleasingly distributed, the soil, the pasture, has improved. We are in a new country. We have entered upon

Yering proper, a veritable oasis in this unredeemed stringy-bark desert.

How Mr. William Ryrie, in the year 1837 or 1838, brought his flocks and herds and general pioneer equipment straight across country from Arnprior in far Monaro in New South Wales, hitting precisely upon this tenantless lodge in the wilderness, will always be a marvel. It was one of the feats which the earlier explorers occasionally performed, showing their fitness for the heroic work of colonisation, wherein so many of them risked life and limb. With the great pastoral wild of Australia Felix lying virgin and unappropriated before him, Mr. Ryrie might easily have made a more profitable, a more expansive choice. But he could not have hit upon a more ideal spot for the founding of an estate and the formation of a homestead had he searched the continent.

Amid the variously-gathered outfit which accompanied the pastoral chief, as he led flocks, herds, and retainers through unknown wilds to the far promised land, happened to be some roots of the tree, the survival of which caused Noah so much uneasiness, and more or less humbled his descendants, before John Jameson and Co. took up the running with the now fashionable product of the harmless *avena*. A few grape vines reached the spot unharmed. Planted in the first orchard on the rich alluvial of the broad river-flat which fronted the cottage, they grew and flourished, so richly that the area devoted to the vine was soon enlarged. From such small beginning arose the vineyards of Ye[illegible] and St. Hubert's. From those, again, Mes[illegible]ry and others

planted the wine-producing district which has now a European reputation.

Little of this, however, was apparent to my companion and myself, or we might have been entertaining royalty by this time—who knows?—carrying ourselves like other eminent and gilded colonists, envied by everybody and sneered at by our less fortunate compatriots. We rode steadily on, through hill and hollow, past plump cattle, not, however, showing quite so much white and roan as do the present herds; past a "manada" of mares and foals, from which ran out to challenge our steeds Clifton the Second, "with flying mane and arching crest." Finally we ride up to a neat weatherboard cottage, whence issues our kindly, warm-hearted host, breathing welcome and hospitality in every tone of his jolly voice. We were soon enjoying the change of sensation, which after a thirty-mile ride is of itself a luxury. With him as visitors were "Hobbie" Elliot, a well-known squatter of the period, and a stalwart younger brother just out from home.

The cottage, as I remember it then, was built upon a slight elevation overlooking a richly-grassed meadow, below which the Yarra, not much less wide and rapid than near Melbourne, ran its winding course. On the farther side of the river, looking eastward, was a purple-shadowed mountain, apparently, though not in reality, overhanging the stream. In the dimmer distance rose the vast snow-crowned range of the Australian Alps. We walked about after our afternoon meal, admiring the great growth of the trees in the garden, and the picturesque appearance of things generally.

On the next day we took a long ride, and, I well remember, crossed the river upon a primitive bridge, which enables me to say to this day that I have ridden across a river upon a single tree. It was even so. An enormous eucalyptus (*E. amygdalina*), growing upon the bank of the Yarra, had been felled or grubbed—I think the latter—so as to fall across the stream. Afterwards it had been adzed level—a hand-rail had been supplied. A quiet horse could therefore be easily led or ridden across to the other side, the width being an average of three feet.

We crossed that way, I know, next day, and had a look at the Heifer Station, as the trans-Yarra run was then called. It was a sort of Yering in miniature, not so open, and much smaller. To it, however, our host was compelled to retire, when (upon how many good fellows has the same fate fallen?) he made a compulsory sale to Paul de Castella and his partner, another Swiss gentleman. Fortunately for him, pastoral property rose in value prodigiously "after the gold," so that he was enabled to sell the heifer station for five times as much as he got for Yering.

However, "unconscious of our doom," we took a long and pleasant ride through ferny dales, and darksome woods where the giant eucalypti reared their heads to heaven. We watched the sparkling streamlets dash down their course from alpine heights, praised the ca[illegible] rses, and returned with appetites of th[illegible] description. Our chief adventure [illegible] ter-laden flat, when Mr. Elli[illegible] high on his horse's [illegible] at

animal, being young and "touchy," immediately exhibited a fair imitation of that well-known Australian gambade known as "buck-jumping." For the honour of Scotia, however, our friend, new chum as he was, stuck to the pigskin, and was justly applauded at the end of the performance.

Live stock were cruelly low about that time—£1 a head for store bullocks, and so on. Fat cattle were never worth more than £3 each, often considerably under that modest price. The expense of stock-management bore hard upon receipts, particularly when the proprietor had not inherited the saving grace of "screwiness." Our host, gallant, generous, warm-hearted William Ryrie, was not in that line; far otherwise. As a matter of fact, Yering was sold to Messrs. de Castella and Co., within a year of our visit, for two or three thousand pounds—some such trifle, at any rate.

So Yering passed into the hands of another good fellow. Though "foreign," and *not* "to the manor born," he quickly demonstrated his ability to acquire the leading principles of stock-management. Of course, the gold came to his aid, causing the cattle he had purchased at £2 each to be worth £8 or £10, and in other ways making things easy for an enterprising pastoralist. Besides managing the herd satisfactorily, Mr. de Castella saw his way to developing the vineyard, enlarging it twenty or fifty fold, besides building cellars, wine-presses, and all the adjuncts of scientific vine-culture. He imported French or Swiss vignerons, and commenced to acquire that high reputation for "white and red Yering" Hermitage which remains unblemished to this day.

Years afterwards, when the tide of pastoral prosperity throughout the colonies was high and unwavering, I made another visit to the spot, under different circumstances and in far other company. A large party had been invited by Mr. and Mrs. de Castella to spend a week at Yering, when a picnic, a dance, and all sorts of *al fresco* entertainments were included in the programme.

We were to meet at Fairlie House, South Yarra, and the day being propitious, the gathering was successful; the *cortège* decidedly imposing. Charlie Lyon's four-in-hand drag led the way; Lloyd Jones's and Rawdon Greene's mail phaetons, with carriages and dog-carts, following in line—it was a small Derby day. The greater proportion of the ladies were accommodated in the vehicles. There were horsemen, too, of the party. The commissariat had been sent on at an early hour, accompanied by a German band, retained for the occasion, to a convenient halting place for luncheon. As we rattled along the broad, straight roads of Kew we saw hedges of roses, orchards in spring blossom, miles of villas and handsome houses, all the signs of a prosperous suburban population. How different from the signs of the past!

Early in the afternoon we sighted the dark-browed Titan on the hither side of which the homestead lay. Mending our pace, we entered a mile-long avenue, cleared with a bridegroom's munificence, as a fitting approach for so fair a bride, on the occasion of his marriage.

I don't think we danced that night—the fairer [illegible] the company being moderately travel- [illegible] up for it on the succeeding

ones. Each day's programme had been marked out, and arrangements made in regal style. Some of us had sent on our favourite hacks; side-saddle and other horses were provided by the host in any quantity. Riding parties, picnics to fern gullies, to Mount Juliet, and other places of romantic interest, were successfully carried out. Races were improvised. Shooting parties, fishing excursions, kangaroo and opossum battues—everything which could impress the idea that life was one perpetual round of mirth and revelry—had been provided for.

As we sat at mid-day on the velvet green sward, by fern-fringed streamlets, under giant gums or the towering patriarchs of the mountain ash, while merry jest and sparkling repartee went round, ardent vow and rippling laughter, we might have been taken—apart from the costume—for an acted chapter out of "Boccaccio." When we came dashing in before sunset, the sound of our approach was like that of a cavalry troop, or the rolling hoof-thunder of marauding Apachés. The Germans were musicians of taste; to the "Morgenblatter" and the "Tausend-und-eine Nachte" valses we danced until the Southern Cross was low in the sky, while as we watched the moon rise, flooding with silver radiance the sombre Alp, and shedding a passing gleam on the rippling river, all might well have passed for an enchanted revel, where mirth, moon, and music would disappear at the waving of a wand.

Years had rolled on since my fir[illegible] pioneer homestead. The cottage h[illegible] or was relegated to other purpose[illegible]

stood a mansion, replete with the appliances of modern country-house life. The vineyard covered acres of the slope, and the grapes were ripening upon thousands of trellised vines. The stables were filled with high-conditioned, high-priced animals, with grooms and helpers in proportion to their needs.

In the meadows below the house grazed hundreds of high-priced shorthorns, some hundreds of which had been purchased from me, Rolf, a few months previously, so that I had the exceptional privilege of drawing attention to the quality of my herd. Steeds of price were there that day. Diane and Crinoline, two peerless ladies' horses; Mr. de Castella's half-Arab carriage pair; Sir Andrew Clarke's roan Cornborough hackney, equally perfect in harness; Mr. Lyon's team of chestnuts, high bred and well matched, not to mention the swell bright chestnut mare "Carnation," for which the owner had refused eighty guineas from an Indian buyer.

The cool, capacious wine-cellars played their part on the occasion, being requisitioned for their choicest "cru." Soda was abundant, the weather warm, and the daily consumption of fluid must have been serious. When the "decamerone" expired, the guests, one and all, were ready to testify that never did mortals more deeply drink of Pleasure's chalice, never return to the prose of ordinary life with more sincere regret.

CHAPTER XXI

TALES OF A "TRAVELLER"

THIS is a "horsey" sketch, possibly therefore unacceptable to the general reader. But any chronicle of my early days, connected as they were with the birth of a great city, would be incomplete without mention of the noble animal so dear to every youthful Australian.

Reared in an atmosphere redolent of the swift courser's triumphs, often compelled to entrust life and limb to the good horse's speed, care indeed requires to be taken that the southern Briton does not somewhat overvalue his fascinating dumb companion—overvalue him to the exclusion from his thoughts of art and science, literature and dogma—to the banishment of rational conversation, and a preference for unprofitable society. So thought an old family friend, Mr. Felton Mathew (he upon his blood bay "Glaucus," and I upon my Timor pony), as we rode towards Enmore from Sydney in old, old days. He testily exclaimed, "For Heaven's sake, Rolf, don't go on talking about horses everlastingly, or you'll grow up like those colonial lads that never

have another idea in their heads." I winced under the rebuke, but accepted it, as became our relative ages. None the less did I bear in my secret breast that Arab-like love for horses and their belongings which marks the predestined son of the Waste here as duly as in Yemen or the Nejd.

How I longed for the day when I should have a station of my own, when I should have blood mares, colts and fillies, perhaps a horse in training, with all the gorgeous adjuncts of stud-proprietorship! The time came—the horses too—many a deeply joyous hour, many a thrill of hope and fear, many a wild ride and daring deed was mine

> Ere nerve and sinew began to fail
> In the consulship of Plancus.

And now the time has passed. The good horses have trotted, and cantered, and galloped away from out my life; most of them from this fair earth altogether. Yet still, memory clings with curious fidelity to the equine friends of the good old time, indissolubly connected as they were with more important personages and events.

Among the earliest blood sires that the district around Melbourne boasted were "Clifton" and "Traveller"—both New South Wales bred horses, and destined to spend their last years in the same stud. Of this pair of thoroughbreds, Clifton, a son of Skeleton and Spaewife, both imported, was bred by the late Mr. Charles Smith, and named Clifton after his stud farm near Sydney. "Skeleton," a grey horse of high lineage, own brother to "Drone," and the property of the Marquis of Sligo, was imported by

the late Mr. William Edward Riley, of Raby, New South Wales. To him many of the best strains of the present day trace their ancestry. "Clifton," a lengthy bay horse, possessing size, speed, and substance, was purchased by Mr. Lyon Campbell, one of the earlier Melbourne magnates, formerly in the army, and by him kept at Campbellfield, on the Yarra, near the Upper Falls. His stock, of which we possessed several, were speedy and upstanding, great jumpers, and as a family the best tempered horses I ever saw. This descended to the second generation. You could "rope," as was the unfair custom of the day, any "Clifton" colt or filly, back them in three days, and within a week ride a journey or do ordinary station work with them. They were free and handy almost at once, and remained so, no matter how long a spell they were treated to afterwards. "Red Deer," with which Mr. Sam Waldock won the Jockeys' Handicap and the All-aged Stakes at Sandhurst, was a Clifton, bred by me. "Jupiter," the winner of the All-aged Stakes in Melbourne in very good company, in 1854 or thereabouts, was another, bred by Mr. James Irvine. His first purchaser put the tackle on him at Dunmore and *rode him away the same day.* He was never a whit the worse hack or racehorse for the abrupt handling. My old Clifton mare, "Cynthia," was ridden barebacked with a halter once, after nearly a year's spell. She was only five years old at the time. Observation of these and other traits confirmed me in the opinion, which I have long held, that the method of breaking has little to do with a horse's paces, and less with his temper or general character. [illegible] *equus*

"*nascitur, non fit*," as is the poet. You can no more imbue the former with desirable dispositions by force of education, even the most careful, than the schools can turn out Tennysons and Brownings by completest tuition.

"Traveller" was another "Sydney-side" celebrity, bred by the late Mr. Charles Roberts—if I mistake not, a turf antagonist of Mr. C. Smith. He was a very grand horse. "The sort we don't see now, sir," as the veteran turfite is so fond of saying. A son of "Bay Camerton," his ancestry ran back, through colonial thoroughbreds, to the Sheik Arab. Not more than fifteen hands in height, a beautiful dark chestnut in colour, he was a model of strength, speed, and symmetry. His shapes inclined more to the Arab type than to the long-striding, galloping machine into which the modern thoroughbred horse has been developed. Standing firmly on shortish, clean, iron-like legs, which years upon years of racing (in the days of heats too) had never deteriorated, he was a weight-carrier with the speed of a deer—a big-jawed Arab head, a well-shaped, high-crested neck, oblique shoulders, just room enough between them and a strong loin for a saddle, a back rib like a cask, high croup, muscular thighs, and broad, well-bent hocks. Everything that could be wished for as a progenitor of hacks, racers, and harness horses. His one defect was moral rather than physical. I shall allude to it in its place. His legs were simply wonderful. At twenty years old—about which time he died suddenly, never having suffered an hour's illness or shown the slightest sign of natural decay—they were as beautifully clean and sound as those of an unbroken three-

year-old. He had run and won many a race, beginning as early as 1835, when he competed with Mr. C. Smith's Chester—a half-brother, by the way—on the old Botany Road racecourse, near Sydney. I, with other schoolboys, attended this meeting, and have a clear remembrance of the depth of the sand through which the cracks of the day—Whisker, Lady Godiva, Lady Emily, and others—had to struggle for the deciding heat.

He was the property of Mr. Hugh Jamieson, of Tallarook, Goulburn River, as far back as 1841 or 1842. That gentleman, one of the originators of the Port Phillip Turf Club, temporarily relinquished breeding, and Traveller passed into the hands of a discriminating and enthusiastic proprietor, Mr. Charles Macknight, late of Dunmore, and by him was employed in the foundation of the celebrated Dunmore stud.

When I referred to the moral defect of "Traveller" —a horse that deserves to be bracketed with "Jorrocks" in the equine chronicles of Australia—my meaning had reference to the temper which he communicated to his immediate, and, doubtless, by the unvarying laws of heredity, to his remoter descendants.

This was as bad as bad could be, chiefly expressed in one particular direction—the crowning characteristic vice of Australian horses—that of buck-jumping. Curiously, the old horse was quiet and well conducted himself, though there *was* a legend of his having killed a man on the Sydney racecourse by a kick. However that might be, he was apparently of a serene and generous nature.

So was his first foal born at Dunmore. "St.

George" was the offspring of "Die Vernon" by "Peter Fin," well known afterwards as a hunter, when owned by Alick Cuningham and James Murphy. "St. George," from circumstances, was a couple of years older than the first crop of Traveller foals, and, having been made a pet of by Mr. Macknight, was very quiet when broken in by that gentleman personally, a fine rough-rider and philosophical trainer as he was, a combination not often reached. Hence, from "St. George's" docility, great expectations were entertained of the temper of the "Traveller" stock.

"All depends upon the breaking," says the young and ardent, but chiefly inexperienced, horse-lover.

"Not so! The leading qualities of horse and man are strongly hereditary. Education *modifies*, but removes not, the inherited tendency—sometimes hardly even modifies."

So, whether "Traveller's" dam had an ineradicable taste for "propping," or was cantankerous otherwise, disencumbering herself, on occasion, of saddle, rider, and such trifles, or whether he himself, in early youth, used to send the stable-boys flying ever and anon, I have no means of knowing. Nothing can be surer, however, than this fact, that most of the Traveller colts and fillies at Dunmore and surrounding stations displayed an indisposition to be broken in little short of insanity.

When ridden for the first time they fought and struggled, bucked and kicked, fell down, got up, and went at it again with unabated fury. Tamed by hard work and perseverance, when they were turned out for a little rest, they were nearly as bad, if taken

up again, as at the first onset. When apparently quietened, they would set to work with a stranger as though he were some new species of pre-Adamite man. All sorts of grooms were tried, dare-devils who could ride anything, steady ones who mouthed carefully and gave plenty of exercise and preparation. It was all the same in result. They were hard to break in, hard to ride when they were broken in, and sometimes hardest of all in the intervals of station work. Of course there were exceptions. But they were few. And a stranger who was offered a fresh horse at a station in the neighbourhood was apt to ask if he was a "Traveller"; and if answered in the affirmative, to look askance and inquire when he had been ridden last, and whether he had then "done anything," before committing himself to his tender mercies.

It was the more provoking because in all other respects the family character was unassailable. They were handsome and level of shape, iron-legged, full of courage and staying power, well-paced, and in some instances very fast—notably Tramp, Trackdeer, St. George, No Ma, Triton, The Buckley colt, and many others. Triton won the Three-year-old Stakes at Port Fairy against a good field, and the Geelong Steeplechase the year after, running up and winning on the post after a bad fall, and with his rider's collar-bone broken. The offspring of particular mares were observed to be better tempered than others. Triton's dam, Katinka, was a Clifton, and he was in the main good-humoured; though I remember him throwing his boy just before a race. The "Die Vernons" were mostly like their mother, free and liberal-minded; but many of the others—I may

say most of them—were "regular tigers," requiring the horsemen who essayed to ride them habitually to be young, valiant, in hard training, and up to all the tricks of the rough-riding trade. That they seldom commended themselves to elderly gentlemen may easily be believed. Even here was the exception. The late Mr. Gray, Crown Lands Commissioner for the Western District, when on his rounds, took a fancy to a fine bay colt, just broken in, and bought him. He, however, caused a young police trooper to ride him provisionally, and for many a month he went about under one or other of the orderlies. I never observed the portly person of the Commissioner upon the bay colt. He eventually disposed of him untried for that service.

Four colts in one year went to "that bourne from which no 'Traveller' returns"—(James Irvine's joke, all rights reserved). One filly threw her rider on the run, galloped home, and broke her neck over the horse paddock fence, which she was too *tête exaltée* to remark. One reared up and fell over; never rose. One broke his back, after chasing every one out of the yard, in trying to get under an impossible rail. And one beautiful cob (mine) fractured his spinal vertebræ in dashing at the gate like a wild bull.

The history of this steed, and of others which I have observed more recently, has most fully satisfied me of the hereditary transmission of qualities in horse-breeding, and nothing, therefore, will convince me to the contrary. I was then in a position to try the experiment personally, as well as to see it tried.

For, observe the conditions. The proprietors of Dunmore were young, highly intelligent persons, with

a turn for scientific research; good horsemen, all fond of that branch of stock-breeding. The run being of choice quality was comparatively small in extent. The stock were kept in paddocks for part of the year. The grooms were good, and always under strict supervision. The young horses were stabled and well fed during breaking, brushed and curry-combed daily. They were used after the cattle when partly broken—an excellent mode of completing a horse's education. And yet the result was, as I have described, unsatisfactory. The majority of the young horses turned out of this model establishment were with great difficulty broken to saddle, and even then were troublesome and unsafe. How can this condition of affairs be accounted for, except upon the hypothesis that in animals, as in the human subject, certain inherited tendencies are reproduced with such strange similarity to those of immediate or remote ancestors as to be incapable of eradication, and well-nigh of modification, by training?

I may state here that I should not have entered so freely into the subject had the Dunmore stud, as such, been still in existence. Such is not the case. Two of the three proprietors, once high in hope and full of well-grounded anticipations of success in their colonial career, are in their graves. Dunmore, so replete with pleasant memories, has long been sold. The stud is dispersed. My old friend James Irvine, though still in the flesh and prospering, as he de[illegible] has only an indirect interest in the [illegible] "Traveller," whose qualities durin[illegible] never have suffered to be thu[illegible]

"Traveller temper," still doubtless existent in various high-bred individuals, is perchance wearing out. After all, this equine exhumation is but the history of the formation of an opinion. It may serve a purpose, however, if it leads to the resolution in the minds of intending stud-masters, "never to breed from a sire of bad-tempered stock."

CHAPTER XXII

YAMBUK

ONCE upon a time, in a "kingdom by the sea," known to men as Port Fairy, "Yambuk" was a choice and precious exemplar of the old-fashioned cattle station. What a haven of peace—what a restful elysium, would it be in these degenerate days of hurry and pressure and progress, and all that—could one but fall upon it! If one could only gallop up now to that garden gate, receive the old cordial welcome, and turn his horse into the paddock, what a *fontaine de jouvence* would bubble up! Should one ride forth and essay the deed? It could hardly be managed. We should not be able to find our way. There would be roads and fences, with obtrusive shingled cottages, and wheat-fields, barns, and threshing machines—in short, all the hostile emblems of agricultural settlement, as it is called.

> I like it not; I would the plain
> Lay in its tall old groves again.

Fronting the farther side of the Shaw River, down to a bank of which the garden sloped, were

broad limestone flats, upon which rose clumps of the beautiful blackwood or hickory tree, some of Australia's noblest growth, when old and umbrageous.

The bungalow, low-roofed, verandah-protected, was thatched at the early period which I recall, the rafters the strongest of the slender ti-tree saplings in the brush which bordered the river-side. The mansion was not imposing, but what of that? The rooms were of fair size, the hospitality refined, spontaneous, and pervading every look and tone; and we, who in old days were wont to share it on our journeys to and from the metropolis of the district, would not have exchanged it for a palace.

People were not so ambitious then as of late years. Nor was the transcendent future of stock-holding visible to the mental eye, when companies and syndicates would compete for the possession of mammoth holdings, with more sheep and cattle depasturing thereon than we then believed the whole colony could carry.

No! a man with a thousand head of well-bred cattle, on a run capable of holding half as many more, so as to leave a reserve in case of bush-fires and bad seasons, was thought fairly endowed with this world's goods. If prudent, he was able to afford himself a trip to Melbourne twice a year or so, and to save money in reason. He generally kept a few brood mares, and so was enabled to rear a superior hackney for himself or friend. As it was not the custom to keep more than a stock-rider, and one other man for general purposes, he had a reasonable share of daily work cut out for himself.

"Yambuk" was then an extremely picturesque station, combining within its limits unusual variety of soil and scenery, land and water. The larger grazing portion consisted of open undulating limestone ridges, which ran parallel with the sea-beach. The River Shaw, deepening as it debouched on the ocean, was the south-eastern boundary of the run. All the country for some miles up its course, past the village of Orford, then only known as The Crossing Place, and along the coast-line towards Portland Bay, was originally within the bounds of the "Yambuk" run.

Between the limestone ridges and the sea were sand-hills, thickly covered with the forest oak, which, growing almost to the beach, braved the stern sea blasts. Very sound and well sheltered were they, affording advantageous quarters to the herd in the long winters of the West.

When our dreamy summer-time was o'er, a truly Arcadian season, with "blue and golden days" and purple-shadowed eves, wild wrathful gales hurtled over the ocean waste, rioting southward to the Pole. Mustering in stormy weather was a special experience. Gathering amid the sea-woods, the winter's day darkening fast, a drove of heavy bullocks, perhaps, lumbering over the sands before us, amid the flying spume, their hoofs in the surf ever and anon,—it was a season study, worth riding many a mile to see. No cove or bay restrained the angry waters. A misty cloud-rack formed the horizon, to which stretched the boundless ocean-plain of the Pacific, while giant billows, rank on rank, foamed fiercely landward, to meet in wrath and impotently rage on the lonely shore below us.

How often has that picture been recalled to me in later years amid the arid plains of Australia Deserta! The sad-toned, far-stretching shore—the angry storm-voices of the terrible deep—the little band of horsemen—the lowing, half-wild drove—the red-litten cloud prison, wherein the sun lay dying!

Pleasant exceedingly, in contrast, when the cattle were yarded and rails securely pegged, to unsaddle and walk into the house, where lights and glowing fires, with a well-appointed table, awaited us, presided over by a Châtelaine whose soft voice and ever-varied converse, mirthful or mournful, serious or satirical, practical or poetic, never failed to soothe and interest.

Stock-riding in those days, half real business, half sport, as we youngsters held it to be, was certainly not one of those games into which, as Lindsay Gordon sings—"No harm could possibly find its way."

Part of the "Yambuk" run was distinctly dangerous riding. Where the wombats dug their treacherous shafts and galleries, how many a good steed and horseman have I seen o'erthrown! These peculiar night-feeding animals, akin to the badger of the old country, burrowed much among the coast hummocks. Their open shafts, though not particularly nice to ride among at speed, with your horse's head close behind the hard-pressed steer, were trifling d[illegible] backs compared to the horizontal "drives" [illegible] which, when mined too near the surface, your [illegible] feet often broke. The solid turf would [illegible] and letting your horse into a concealed pit [illegible]

the shoulder, gave a shock that often told tales in a strained joint or a broken collar-bone. We fell lightly in those days, however, and, even when our nags rolled over us, scorned to complain of the trifling occurrence.

The limestone country, too, held cavities and sudden appearing fissures of alarming depth, which caused the fiery steed to tremble and the ardent rider to pale temporarily when suddenly confronted. At the south-eastern boundary of the run the forests were dense, the marshes deeper, the country generally more difficult, than on the coast-line. The ruder portion of the herd "made out" that way, and many a hard gallop they cost us at muster-time.

The run had been "taken up" for and on account of Captain Baxter, formerly of Her Majesty's 50th Regiment, about a year before my time, that is in 1843, by Mr. George Dumoulin, acting as overseer. This gentleman, a son of one of the early Imperial officials, and presumably of Huguenot descent, was a most amusing and energetic person. Inheriting the *legèreté* of his Gallic ancestors, his disposition led him to be *toujours gai*, even under the most unpromising circumstances. A capital manager, in the restricted sense then most appreciated, he spent no money, save on the barest necessaries, and did all the stock-keeping himself, with the occasional aid of a black boy. When I first set eyes on Yambuk station there were but two small thatched huts, no garden, no horse-paddock, and a very indifferent stock-yard. The rations had run out lately—there was no salt, for one thing—and as the establishment had then been living upon fresh veal for a fortnight,

it was impressed upon me, forcibly, that no one here would look at fillets or cutlets of that "delicate meat that the soul loveth," under ordinary culinary conditions, for at least a year afterwards.

Mr. Dumoulin, though wonderfully cheery as a general rule, was subject to occasional fits of despondency. They were dark, in proportion to his generally high standard of spirits. When this lowered tone set in, he generally alluded to his want of success hitherto in life, the improbability of his attaining to a station of his own, the easiest thing in those days if you had a very little money or stock. But capital being scarce and credit wanting for the use of enterprising speculators who had nothing but pluck and experience, it was hard, mostly impossible, to procure that necessary fulcrum. Regarding those things, and mourning over past disappointments, he generally wound up by affirming that "all the world would come right, but that poor Dumoulin would be left on his—beam ends—at the last." And yet what splendid opportunities lay in the womb of Time for him, for all of us! So when Captain Baxter and his wife came from their New England home to take possession and live at Yambuk "for good," there was no necessity for Mr. Dumoulin to abide there longer, the profits of a station of that size rarely permitting the proprietor and overseer to jointly administer. When the gold came we heard of him in a position of responsibility and high pay, but whether he rose to his proper status, or malignant destiny refused promotion, we have no knowledge. He was a good specimen of the pioneers to whom Australia owes so much—brave to recklessness, patient of toil,

hardy, and full of endurance—a good bushman and first-class stock-rider.

The captain and Mrs. Baxter drove tandem overland the whole distance from New England to Yambuk, some hundreds of miles, encamping regularly with a few favourite horses and dogs. Their journal, faithfully kept, of each day's progress and the road events was a most interesting one, and would show that even before the days of Miss Bird and Miss Gordon-Cumming there were lady travellers who dared the perils of the wilderness and its wilder denizens. A fine horsewoman, passionately fond of her dumb favourites, Mrs. Baxter was as happy in the company of her nice old roan Arab "Kaffir," the beautiful greyhound "Ada," and the collie "Rogue," as more *exigeantes*, though not more gently nurtured dames, would have been with all the materials of a society picnic.

One advantage of this sort of overland-route work is that when the goal *is* reached the humblest surroundings suffice for a home, all luxury and privilege being comprehended in the idea that you have not to move on next day.

Once arrived, the abode *en permanence* is the great matter for thankfulness. The building may be unfinished and inadequate, not boasting even of a chimney, yet rugs are spread as by Moslems in a caravanserai, and all thank Allah fervently in that we are permitted to stay and abide there indefinitely.

With the arrival of the master and mistress speedy alteration for the better took place. The cottage was built—an Indian bungalow in archi-

tecture—with wooden walls, the roof and verandahs thatched with the long tussock grass. A garden with fruit trees and flowers was planted, the fertile chocolate-coloured loam responding eagerly. Furniture arrived, including a piano and other lady adjuncts. A detached kitchen was constructed. Mr. Dumoulin's "improvements" were abandoned to the stock-rider, and the new era of "Yambuk" was inaugurated. Far pleasanter in every way, to my mind, than any which have succeeded it. The *locale* certainly had many advantages. It was only twelve miles from that fascinatingly pleasant little country town of Port Fairy — we didn't call it Belfast then, and didn't want to. The road was good, and admitted of riding in and out the same day. As it was a seaport town, stores were cheap, and everything needful could be procured from Sydney or Melbourne. There was then not an acre of land sold, west of the Shaw, before you reached Portland, and very little to the east, except immediately around the town. One cannot imagine a more perfect country residence, having regard to the period, and the necessities of the early squatting community. The climate was delightful. Modified Tasmanian weather prevailed, nearly as cold in winter, quite sufficiently bracing, but without frost, the proximity to the coast so providing. English fruits grew and bore splendidly. Finer apples and pears, gooseberries and cherries, no rejoicing schoolboy ever revelled in. The summers were surpassingly lovely, cooled with the breezes that swept over the long rollers of the Pacific, and lulled the sleeper to rest with the measured roll of the surge upon the broad beaches which stretched

from the Moyne to Portland Bay. Talking of beaches, what a glorious sensation is that of riding over one at midnight!

> Ah! well do I remember
> That loved and lonely hour

when a party of us started one moonlight night to ride from Port Fairy to Portland (fifty miles) for the purpose of boarding an emigrant vessel, from which we hoped to be able to hire men-servants and maid-servants, then, as now, exceeding scarce. My grand little horse "Hope" had carried me from home, thirty miles, that day, but, fed and rested, he was not particular about a few miles farther. We dined merrily, and at something before ten o'clock set forth. Lloyd Rutledge, who was my companion, rode his well-known black hackney and plater, "Molonglo Jack." As we started at a canter along the Portland road—the low moon nearly full, and just rising, the sky cloudless—it was an Arabian Night, one for romance and adventure. The other horses had been in their stalls all day, but as I touched my lower bridle rein my gallant little steed—one of the most awful pullers that ever funked a Christian—rose on his hind legs and made as though about to jump on to the adjoining houses. This was only a trick I had taught him; at a sign he would rear and plunge "like all possessed," but it showed that he was keen for business, and I did not fear trying conclusions with the best horse there. Like Mr. Sawyer's Jack-a-dandy, he would have won the Derby if it had not been more than half a mile. He did win the Port Fairy Steeplechase next year, over stiff timber,

with Johnny Gorrie on his back, and in good company too.

Away we went. The sands were some miles past Yambuk. When we rode down upon them, what wonders lay before us! The tide was out. For leagues upon leagues stretched the ocean shore—a milk-white beach, wide as a parade-ground, level as a tennis-court, and so hard under foot that our horses' hoofs rang sharp and clear. Excited by the night, the moon, the novelty, they tore at their bits and raced one another in a succession of heats, which it took all our skill, aided by effective double bridles of the Weymouth pattern, to moderate. As for our companions, they were left miles behind.

We were at the turn, just abreast of "Lady Julia Percy Island," which lay on the slumbering ocean's breast like some cloud fallen from the sky, or an enchanted isle, where the fairy princess might be imprisoned until the Viking's galley arrived, or the prince was conveniently cast away on the adjacent rocks.

Far as eye could see shone the illimitable ocean, "still as a slave before his lord," star-brightened here and there. Southward a lengthening silver pathway rippled in the moon-gleam, shimmering and glowing far away towards the soft cloudland of the horizon. Tiny capes ran in from the forest border, and barred the line of vision from time to time. Sweeping around these, our excited horses speeding as they had become winged, we entered upon a fresh bay, another milk-white beach, fitted for fairy revels. While over all the broad and yellow moon shed a flood of radiance in which each twig and leaf of the

forest fringe was visible. So still was the night that even "the small ripple spilt upon the beach" fell distinctly upon the ear.

As the pale dawn cloud rose in the east, the slumbering ocean began to stir and moan. A land breeze came sighing forth from the dense forest like a reproachful dryad as we charged the steep side of Lookout Hill, and saw the roofs of Portland town before us. It was a longish stage—fifty miles—but our horses still pressed gaily forward as if the distance had been passed in a dream. We had no time to sentimentalise. Labour was scarce. We stabled our good steeds, and transferred ourselves to a waterman's boat. When the employers of Portland came on board in leisurely fashion some hours later, the flower of the farm labourers were under written agreement to proceed to Port Fairy. It rather opened the eyes of the Portlanders, whom, in the sauciness of youth, we of the rival township who called William Rutledge our mercantile chief were wont to hold cheap. They needed servants for farm and station, as did we, but there was no help for it; they had to content themselves with what were left.

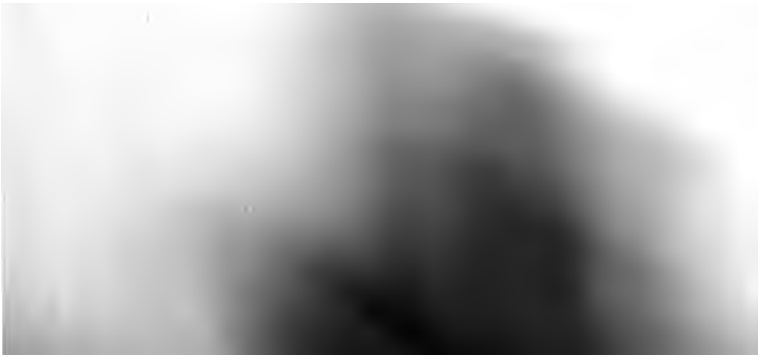
Personally, I had done well. The brothers Michael and Patrick Horan — two fine upstanding Carlow men as one would wish to see—were indentured safely to me for a year. They served me well in the after-time. Their brother-in-law, with his wife, as a "married couple," and a smart "colleen" about sixteen, a younger sister, came with them. It was a "large order," but all our hands had cleared for Ballarat and Forest Creek; we had hardly a soul in the place but the overseer and myself. These

immigrants were exactly of the class we wanted. I know a place where a few such shiploads would be of great and signal utility now. They were willing, well-behaved, and teachable. I broke in Pat Horan to the stock-riding business, and within a twelvemonth he could ride a buck-jumper, rope, brand, and draft with any old hand in the district. He repeatedly took cattle to market in sole charge, and was always efficient and trustworthy. Mick showed a gift for ploughing and bullock-driving, and generally preferred farming. They both remained with me for years—Pat, indeed, till the station was sold. They are thriving farmers, I believe, within a few miles of Squattlesea Mere, at this present day. I waited until nightfall, making arrangements to receive our *engagés* when they should arrive in Port Fairy, and then mounted "Hope," in order to ride the thirty miles which lay between me and home. The old horse was as fresh as paint, and landed me there well on the hither side of midnight. One feels inclined to say there are no such horses nowadays, but there is a trifling difference in the rider's "form," I fancy, which accounts for much of this apparent equine degeneracy. Anyhow, Hope was a "plum," and so was his mother before him. Didn't she give me a fall over a fence at Yambuk one day, laming me for a week and otherwise knocking me about—the only time I ever knew her make a mistake? But wasn't a lady looking on, and wouldn't I have broken my neck cheerfully, or any other important vertebra, for the sake of being pitied and petted after the event?

When the gold discovery, and the conse

rise in prices, took place, Captain Baxter was tempted to sell Yambuk with a good herd of cattle, and so departed for the metropolis. Our society began to break up—its foundations to loosen. People got so rich that they voted station life a bore, and promoted their stock-riders to be overseers in charge. Many of these were worthy people. But the charm of bush life had departed when the proprietor no longer greeted you on dismounting, when there was no question of books or music or cheery talk with which to while away the evening. And thinking over those pleasant homes in the dear old forest days, where one was always sure of sympathy and society, I know one wayworn pilgrim who will ever in fancy recur to the *bon vieux temps* whereof a goodly proportion—sometimes for one reason, sometimes for another—was passed at Yambuk.

POEMS



BALLAARAT

A VISION OF GOLD

I SEE a lone stream, rolling down
Through valleys green, by ranges brown
  Of hills that bear no name,
The dawn's full blush in crimson flakes
Is traced on palest blue, as breaks
  The morn in Orient flame.

I see—whence comes that eager gaze?
Why rein the steed, in wild amaze?
  The water's hue is gold!
Golden its wavelets foam and glide,
Through tenderest green to ocean-tide
  The fairy streamlet rolled.

"Forward, 'Hope!' forward! truest steed,
Of tireless hoof and desert speed,
  Up the weird water bound,
Till, echoing far and sounding deep,
I hear old Ocean's hoarse voice sweep
  O'er this enchanted ground?"

The sea!—wild fancy! Many a mile
Of changeful Nature's frown and smile
  Ere stand we on the shore.
And, yet! that murmur, hoarse and deep,
None save the ocean-surges keep?
  It is—"the cradles' roar!"

Onward! we pass the grassy hill,
Around the base the waters still
  Shimmer in golden foam;
O wanderer of the voiceless wild,
Of this far southern land the child,
  How changed thy quiet home!

For, close as bees in countless hive,
Like emmet hosts that earnest strive,
  Swarmed, toiled, a vast, strange crowd:
Haggard each worker's features seem,
Bright, fever-bright, each eye's wild gleam,
  Nor cry, nor accent loud.

But each man dug, or rocked, or bore,
As if salvation with the ore
  Of the mine-monarch lay.
Gold strung each arm to giant might,
Gold flashed before each aching sight,
  Gold turned the night to day.

Where Eblis reigns o'er boundless gloom,
And, in his halls of endless doom
  Lost souls for ever roam,
They wander (says the Eastern tale),
Nor ever startles moan or wail
  Despair's eternal home.

Less silent scarce than that pale host
These toiled, as if each moment lost
  Were the red life-drop spilt;
While, heavy, rough, and darkly bright,
In every shape, rolled to the light
  Man's hope, and pride, and guilt.

All ranks, all ages! Every land
Had sent its conscripts forth, to stand
  In the gold-seekers' rank:
The stalwart bushman's sinewy limb,
The pale-faced son of trade—e'en him
  Who knew the fetters' clank.

. . . . .

'Tis night: her jewelled mantle fills
The busy valley, the dun hills,
  'Tis a battle host's repose!
A thousand watch-fires redly gleam,
While ceaseless fusillades would seem
  To warn approaching foes.

The night is older. On the sward
Stretched, I behold the heavens broad,
  When—a Shape rises dim,
Then, clearer, fuller, I descry,
By the swart brow, the star-bright eye,
  The Gnome-king's presence grim!

He stands upon a time-worn block;
His dark form shades the snowy rock
  As cypress marble tomb:
Nor fierce yet wild and sad his mien,
His cloud-black tresses wave and stream
  His deep tones break the gloom.

"Son of a tribe accursed, of those
Whose greed has broken our repose
Of the long ages dead,
Think ye, for nought our ancient race
Leaves olden haunts, the sacred place
Of toils for ever fled?

"List while I tell of days to come,
When men shall wish the hammers dumb
That ring so ceaseless now;
That every arm were palsy-tied,
Nor ever wet on grey hillside
Was the gold-seeker's brow.

"I see the old world's human tide
Set southward on the ocean wide.
I see a wood of masts,
While crime or want, disease or death,
With each sigh of the north-wind's breath,
He on this fair shore casts.

"I see the murderer's barrel gleam,
I hear the victim's hopeless scream
Ring through these crimeless wastes;
While each base son of elder lands
Each witless dastard, in vast bands
To the gold-city hastes.

"Disease shall claim her ready toll,
Flushed vice and brutal crime the dole
Of life shall ne'er deny;
Danger and death shall stalk your streets
While staggering idiocy greets
The horror-stricken eye!

"All men shall roll in the gold mire—
The height, the depth of man's desire—
Till come the famine years;
Then all the land shall curse the day
When first they rifled the dull clay,
With deep remorseful tears.

"Fell want shall wake to fearful life
The fettered demons. Civil strife
Rears high a gory hand!
I see a blood-splashed barricade,
While dimly lights the twilight glade
The soldier's flashing brand.

"But thou, son of the forest free!
Thou art not, wert not foe to me,
Frank tamer of the wild!
Thou hast not sought the sunless home
Where darkly delves the toiling Gnome,
The mid-earth's swarthy child.

"Then, be thou ever, as of yore,
A dweller in the woods, and o'er
Fresh plains thy herds shall roam.
Join not the vain and reckless crowd
Who swell the city's pageant proud,
But prize thy forest home."

He said: and [illegible]th an eldritch scream,
The Gnome [illegible] vanished—and my dream:
Dawn's [illegible] hour returned;
Yet still [illegible]nes echoed clear,
For many [illegible] reason's ear,
And [illegible] burned.

THE DEATH OF WELFORD[1]

OUT by the far west-waters,
  On the sea-land of the South,
Untombed the bones of a white man lay,
Slowly crumbling to kindred clay—
  Sad prayer from Death's mute mouth!

Alone, far from his people,
  The sun of his life went down.
A cry for help? No time—not a prayer:
As red blood splashed thro' riven hair,
  His soul rose to Heaven's throne.

Ah! well for those felon hands
  Which the strong man foully slew,
The cry from the Cross when our Saviour died
"Father, forgive"—as they pierced His side—
  "For they know not what they do."

They have souls, say the teachers
  Hereafter, the same as we:
If so, it is hid from human grace
By blood-writ crimes of savage race
  So deep, that we cannot see.

[1] A young Englishman, "killed by blacks on the Barcoo."

Fear than love is far stronger:
  The cruel have seldom to rue:
The neck is bowed 'neath the heavy heel,
Love's covenant with *Death* they seal;
  "For they know not what they do."

This Dead, by the far sun-down,
  This man whom they idly slew,
Was lover and friend to those who had slain
With him all human love, like Cain;
  But "they know not what they do."

'Twixt laws Divine and human
  To judge, if we only knew,
When the blood is hot, to part wrong from right,
When to forgive and when to smite
  Foes who "know not what they do."

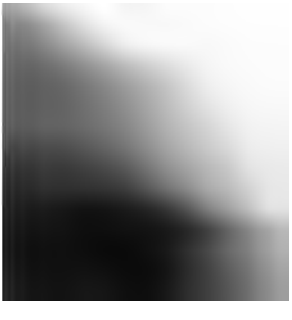
The wronger and wronged shall meet
  For judgment, to die, or live;
And the heathen shall cry, in anguish fell,
At sight of the Bottomless Pit of Hell—
  "We knew not, O Lord! Forgive."

SUNSET IN THE SOUTH

It is Autumn, it is sunset, magic shower of tint and hue;
All the west is hung with banners, white with golden,
crimson, blue;
Drooping folds! far floating, mingling, falling on the
river's face;
Upturned, placid, silver-mirrored, gazing into endless
space.

Faint the breath of eve, low-sighing for bright
summer's fading charms;
Woodland cries are echoing, chiming with the sounds
from distant farms;
And the stubble fires are gleaming red athwart
the wood's deep shade,
While the marsh mist, slowly rising, shrouds the
greenery of the glade.

Redly still the day is dying, as if o'er the desert waste,
And we pictured camels, Arabs, and the solemn outline
traced
Of a pillared lonely Fane, clear against the crimson
rim,
Voiceless, but of empire telling, an[illegible]
dim.



"BALACLAVA"

THE word is "Charge," the meaning "Death,"
  Yet, welcome falls the sound
On every ear in the listening host,
Whose pennons flutter, zephyr-tossed,
  That messenger around.

Among them Nolan reins a steed
  Frost-white with gathered foam,
And pale and stern points to the foe,
In heavy mass, receding slow—
  "Charge, comrades, charge them home!"

There rides one with fearless brow,
  By time and sorrow scarred.
For him life knows no tale untold,
But empty names, love, hope, and gold,—
  Cool player of Fate's last card!

Beside him, he whose golden youth
  Is in its pride and bloom.
His thoughts are with a dear old home,
Its loved ones, and that *other one*,
  And will she mourn his doom?

Another knows of a sweet fond face
  That will fade into ashy pale
As she hears the tale of that day of tears;
And a prayer rises to Him who hears
  The widow and orphan's wail.

"We die," passed through each warrior's heart,
  "And vainly, but the care
Rests not with us; 'tis ours to show
The world, old England, and the foe,
  What Englishmen can dare."

Then bridle-reins are gathered up,
  And sabres blaze on high,
And as each charger bounds away
Doubts flee like ghosts at opening day,
  And each man joys to die.

St. George! it is a glorious sight
  A splendid page of war,
To mark yon gorgeous, matchless troop,
Like some bright falcon, wildly swoop
  On the sullen prey before.

CAPTAIN MARTINET (*loquitur*).

"Hurrah for the hearts of Englishmen,
  And the thoroughbred's long stride,
As the vibrating, turf-tearing hoof-thunder
'Twas worth a year of one's life, all told,
  To have seen our fellows ride!"

But what avails the sabre sweep?
  There rolls the awful sound,
Telling through heart, and limb, and brain,
That the cannon mows its ghastly lane,
  And corses strew the ground.

Ha! Nolan flings his arms apart,
  And a death-cry rings in air;
And see, may Heaven its mercy yield!
His charger from a hopeless field
  Doth a *dead rider* bear.

The gunners lie by their linstocks dead,
  While deep on every brow,
In the bloody scroll of our island swords,
Is the tale of each horseman's dying words,
  "Our memory is deathless now."

Staggering back goes a broken band,
  With standards soiled and torn,
With gory saddles and reeling steeds,
And ranks that are swaying like surging reeds
  On a wild autumn morn.

Despair has gazed on many a field
  Won by our fearless race;
And well the night wind, sighing low,
Knows where, with breast broad to the foe,
  Is the dead Briton's place.

But never living horsemen rode
  So near the eternal marge,
As those who ran the tilt that day
With Death, and bore their lives away
  From the Balaclava charge.

THE BUSHMAN'S LULLABY

LIFT me down to the creek bank, Jack,
  It must be fresher outside;
The long hot day is well-nigh done;
It's a chance if I see another one;
I should like to look on the setting sun,
  And the water, cool and wide.

We didn't think it would be like this
  Last week, as we rode together;
True mates we've been in this far land
For many a year, since Devon's strand
We left for these wastes of sun-scorched sand
  In the blessed English weather.

We left when the leafy [illegible] were green
  And the trees met [illegible],
The rippling brooks [illegible] and gay,
The air was sweet [illegible] of hay,
How well I remem[illegible] day
  And the word[illegible] said!

We have [illegible] fought it out
  U[illegible]

Where the plains glowed red in tremulous light,
Where the haunting mirage mocked the sight
Of desperate men from morn till night,—
  And the streams had long been dry.

Where we dug for gold on the mountain-side,
  Where the ice-fed river ran;
In frost and blast, through fire and snow,
Where an Englishman could live and go,
We've followed our luck through weal and woe,
  And never asked help from man.

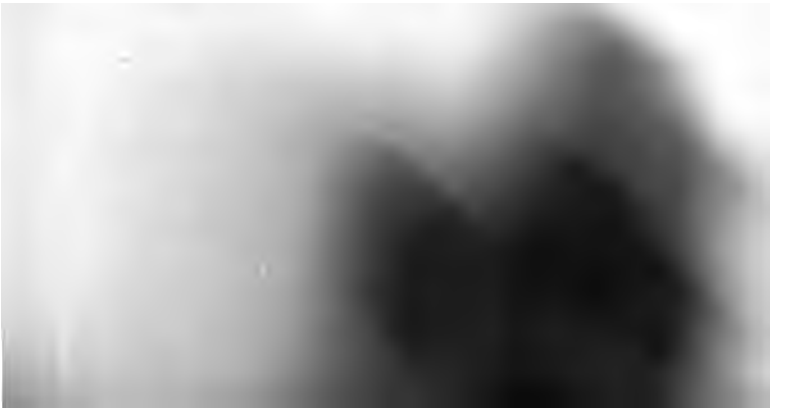
And now it's over, it's hard to die
  Ere the summer of life is o'er,
When the pulse beats high and the limbs are stark,
Ere time has printed one warning mark,
To quit the light for the unknown dark,
  And, O God! to see home no more!

No more! no more! I that always vowed
  That, whether or rich or poor,
Whatever the years might bring or change,
I would one day stand by the grey old grange,
And the children would gather, all shy and strange,
  As I entered the well-known door.

You will go home to the old place, Jack;
  Then tell my mother for me,
That I thought of the words she used to say,
Her looks, her tones, as I dying lay,
That I prayed to God, as I used to pray
  When I knelt beside her knee.

. . . . .

By the lonely water they made their couch,
  And the southern night fast fled ;
They heard the wildfowl splash and cry,
They heard the mourning reeds' low sigh,
Such was the Bushman's lullaby,—
  With the dawn his soul was sped.



MORNING

MORN on the waters! the glad bird flings
The diamond spray from his glittering wings.
Old ocean lieth in dreamless sleep,
As the slumber of childhood calmly deep,
Light falls the stroke of the fisher's oar,
As he leaves his cot by the shingly shore;
While the young wife's gaze, half sad, half bright,
Follows the frail bark's flashing flight.

Noon on the waters! O rustling breeze,
Sweet stealer 'mid old forest trees,
Wilt thou not thy sweet whisper keep
Nigh him who journeys the shadeless deep?
The wanderer dreams of the shadowy dell,
And the green-turfed, fairy-haunted well,
While the shafts of the noon-king's merciless might
Mingle day with sorrow, and death with light.

Night on the waters! murmuring hoarse,
The vexed deep threatens the bold bark's course,
The thunder-growl and the tempest moan
Sound like spirits that watch for the dying groan.
The storm-fiend sweeps o'er the starless waste,
And the unchained blasts to the gathering haste;
Man alone, unshaken, his course retains,
While the elements combat and chaos reigns.

WANTED

A young Lady of twenty-three years of age, as a teacher in a Ladies' School. Satisfactory references required.—"TIMES" *Advertisement.*

WHY should I be *twenty-three?*
What are the virtues they can see
Just about to bloom in me
In the magical year of *twenty-three?*
Does a maiden, fair and free,
Get prudent just at *twenty-three?*
Whatever can the reason be
That they want a girl just *twenty-three?*

Dignified matron, whoever you be,
Would not twenty-two do for thee?
Would twenty-one be shown to the door,
And twenty told to come no more?
Nineteen, perhaps, would hardly be fit,
Eighteen strikes one as rather a [illegible]
Why must you search o'er land [illegible]
For the golden age of *twenty-th*[illegible]

Still the years glide on—for [illegible] and for me,
We're nearer, or farther from [illegible]*ty-three.*

Oft, as I sit over my five o'clock tea,
I think, did she get her? age *twenty-three!*
When friends are cold and unkind to me,
I think there's a refuge when *twenty-three.*
On my birthday I'll write, unknown friend, to thee,
Exclaiming, "Here, take me, I'm *twenty-three!*"

PERDITA

SHE is beautiful yet, with her wondrous hair
  And eyes that are stormy with fitful light,
The delicate hues of brow and cheek
  Are unmarred all, rose-clear and bright;
That matchless frame yet holds at bay
The crouching bloodhounds, Remorse, Decay.

There is no fear in her great dark eyes—
  No hope, no love, no care,
Stately and proud she looks around
  With a fierce, defiant stare;
Wild words deform her reckless speech,
Her laugh has a sadness [illegible] never reach.

Whom should she [illegible]? Can fate
  One direr torment [illegible]
To her few little [illegible] and gloom
  With the [illegible],
When the [illegible] Want, and Pain
Shall a[illegible] in their train?

I see in a vision a woman like her
  Trip down an orchard slope,
With rosy prattlers that shout a name
  In tones of rapture and hope;
While the yeoman, gazing at children and wife,
Thanks God for the pride and joy of his life.

. . . . . .

Whose conscience is heavy with this dark guilt?
  Who pays at the final day
For a wasted body, a murdered soul,
  And how shall he answer, I say,
For her outlawed years, her early doom,
And despair—despair—beyond the tomb?

"PRIEZ POUR ELLE"

AN INCIDENT OF THE INDIAN MUTINY

In the old tower they stand at bay,
  Where the Moslem fought of old;
True to their race, in that sad day
  Their lives are dearly sold.

They are but three; a woman fair,
  A boy of fearless brow,
He, whom she vowed to love is there—
  God help her! then and now.

With fiercer leaguer never did
  Those rugged stones resound
As the swarthy yelling masses
  The time-worn keep around.

Our death-doomed brothers
  Our sister loaded well;
With each rifle-crack a
  By scores the rebels

Though corses choke the narrow way,
  Still swarms the demon hive;
Like a tolling bell each heart *will* say
  "We ne'er go forth alive!"

Undaunted still—the leaden rain
  Slacks not one moment's space—
With a crashing bullet through his brain,
  The boy drops on his face!

With outstretched arms, with death-clutched hands,
  His mother's darling lies,
No more, till rent the grave's dark bands,
  To glad her loving eyes.

Gone the last hope! faint gleam of light—
  Death stalks before their eyes—
While yells and screams of wild delight
  From the frenzied crowd arise.

O God of mercy! can it be?
  It is a hideous dream—
No!—nearer rolls the human sea,
  Arms flash, and eyeballs gleam.

He thinks of her, pale, tender, fair—
  To nameless tortures given,
Gore-stained and soiled the bright brown hair—
  His very soul is riven.

He lifts the weapon. Did he think
  Of a happy summer time—
Of the village meadow—river brink,
  Of the merry wedding chime?

Little he dreamed of this dreary Now,
  Or that ever he should stand
With the pistol-muzzle at her brow,
  The trigger in *his* hand!

They kissed—they clung in a last embrace,
  They prayed a last deep prayer—
Then proudly she raised her tearful face,
  And——a corse lay shuddering there!

He stooped, his love's soft eyes to close,
  He smoothed the bright brown hair,
Smiled on the crowd of baffled foes,
  Then, scattered his brains in air.

THE END

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